



F. S. Cunningham presented all these
samples to me between 1884 and 1895
M. H. Sprengel

L'ŒUVRE GRAVÉE
DE
REMBRANDT

ÉTUDE MONOGRAPHIQUE

RÉDIGÉE POUR SERVIR D'INTRODUCTION AU CATALOGUE D'UNE
EXPOSITION DES EAUX-FORTES DU MAÎTRE,
RANGÉES POUR LA PREMIÈRE FOIS DANS L'ORDRE CHRONOLOGIQUE,
DANS LA GALERIE DU BURLINGTON FINE ARTS CLUB
EN MAI 1877, ET DANS LE BUT
DE PRÉSENTER ET DE DISCUTER DES OBSERVATIONS NOUVELLES
SUR LE MANQUE D'AUTHENTICITÉ DE QUELQUES-UNES
DE CES EAUX-FORTES

PAR

FRANCIS-SEYMOUR HADEN, F. R. C. S.

PARIS

GAZETTE DES BEAUX-ARTS

8, RUE FAVART

LONDRES

MAGMILLAN ET C^o

LEIPZIG

ZEITSCHRIFT FÜR BILDENDE KUNST

1880

Tous droits réservés.

from
G. Seymour Ha
May

L'OEUVRE GRAVÉ

DE REMBRANDT

L'ŒUVRE GRAVÉE
DE
REMBRANDT

ÉTUDE MONOGRAPHIQUE

RÉDIGÉE POUR SERVIR D'INTRODUCTION AU CATALOGUE D'UNE
EXPOSITION DES EAUX-FORTES DU MAÎTRE,
RANGÉES POUR LA PREMIÈRE FOIS DANS L'ORDRE CHRONOLOGIQUE,
DANS LA GALERIE DU BURLINGTON FINE ARTS CLUB
EN MAI 1877, ET DANS LE BUT
DE PRÉSENTER ET DE DISCUTER DES OBSERVATIONS NOUVELLES
SUR LE MANQUE D'AUTHENTICITÉ DE QUELQUES-UNES
DE CES EAUX-FORTES

PAR

FRANCIS-SEYMOUR HADEN F. R. C. S.

PARIS

GAZETTE DES BEAUX-ARTS

8, RUE FAVART

LONDRES

MACMILLAN ET C^o

LEIPZIG

ZEITSCHRIFT FÜR BILDENDE KUNST

1880

Tous droits réservés.

AVERTISSEMENT¹



Si l'auteur ne s'était vu en quelque sorte forcé de réimprimer son étude dans sa forme originale, tout en maintenant ses théories au sujet du manque d'authenticité de certaines eaux-fortes attribuées à Rembrandt, il n'aurait pas mis en question le succès général de ses vues, en s'avançant autant qu'il l'a fait dans l'identification absolue de la part qu'il faut attribuer, dans ces eaux-fortes, à chacun des élèves du maître. Il sent qu'en ceci il a essayé de prouver ce qu'il est impossible d'étayer de preuves positives. Il aurait

dû aussi se représenter que des artistes d'un ordre inférieur, lorsqu'ils copient, ne trahissent pas leur style, même quand ils en auraient un qui leur soit propre, et que c'était donc s'égarer que de chercher le style de Lievens ou de Van Vliet, dans leurs efforts pour imiter le style de Rembrandt. L'auteur reconnaît que de semblables attributions sont peu judicieuses, même lorsque, comme dans ce cas, elles sont justifiées par toutes les apparences, parce qu'elles ouvrent la porte à des objections qui, quoique ne touchant pas le fond de l'argumentation, peuvent servir du moins à l'embarrasser et à la défigurer.

Dans la présente traduction, aussi bien que dans celle qui doit paraître en Allemagne, quoique l'exposition du Club soit une chose du passé,

1. M. Seymour Haden a bien voulu faire faire pour la *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* une traduction de son remarquable travail sur l'*Œuvre gravé de Rembrandt*. Nous ne saurions l'en remercier trop chaleureusement. Nous sommes heureux d'en être les éditeurs et de pouvoir l'offrir à tous nos abonnés avec notre livraison de juillet 1880.

(N. D. L. R.)

l'auteur a cru devoir conserver la fiction de cette exposition, c'est-à-dire laisser croire que l'on a encore étalé, sous ses yeux, l'œuvre de Rembrandt arrangé, comme il l'était, dans l'ordre chronologique. Car ce n'est qu'en se reportant tout au moins par la pensée à un arrangement de ce genre qu'il est possible de le suivre dans son argumentation et de discuter ses conclusions. La seule différence que l'on trouve dans les trois versions de ce travail est que dans l'anglaise les numéros de référence sont ceux de Wilson, dans l'allemande, ceux de Bartsch, et dans la présente, ceux de M. Charles Blanc.

M. Charles Blanc, tout en reconnaissant les avantages que présenterait le classement chronologique, nous a dit qu'il ne l'avait pas adopté parce qu'un grand nombre de pièces de Rembrandt ne portent pas de date. L'auteur lui soumet à ce sujet les observations suivantes :

1° Les eaux-fortes les plus importantes qui peuvent être considérées comme types, sont datées.

2° Le style des eaux-fortes aux différentes époques de la vie de Rembrandt étant aussi marqué que le style de ses peintures aux époques correspondantes, il n'y aurait pas plus de difficulté à déterminer la classification des unes que celle des autres.



L'ŒUVRE GRAVÉ DE REMBRANDT



LE but de cette étude peut être défini en peu de mots. A l'occasion d'une première exposition des eaux-fortes de Rembrandt, organisée en 1867 dans l'ancien local du Club, l'auteur suggéra au Comité que l'arrangement par *sujets*, jusqu'alors universellement adopté, était fatal à l'étude comparative des œuvres du maître; qu'il serait plus rationnel de les classer dans l'ordre de leur production; que l'ancienne méthode arbitraire par laquelle les pièces de ses premiers temps étaient mêlées avec celles de la dernière période de sa vie, produisait une confusion dans l'esprit, troublait le jugement et rendait impossible tout examen critique, toute comparaison; en somme, qu'un pareil système, suffisant sans doute pour dresser un catalogue, n'était pas admissible pour le biographe, et était inutile au point de vue de l'étude critique et raisonnée, telle qu'elle est comprise de nos jours. On ne devait pas, disait-on, envisager l'œuvre de toute une existence d'artiste comme une série d'efforts isolés et sans suite, mais, au contraire, comme l'expression continue et régulière d'un enchaînement de causes et d'effets qui ne pouvaient être compris qu'en les étudiant dans l'ordre même de leur manifestation. Enfin on faisait valoir avec confiance que si, à l'ancienne classification inintelligente et décousue, on substituait un arrangement consécutif et régulier, on découvrirait dans l'œuvre de Rem-

Nous aborderons maintenant une partie de notre tâche qui s'adresse plus au connaisseur critique qu'au lecteur ordinaire. Ayant étudié de la vie de Rembrandt ce qui se rattache directement ou indirectement à cette branche de son art qui nous intéresse plus particulièrement et vu le rôle que joue l'eau-forte dans la vie du peintre d'alors, nous arrivons au but principal que nous nous sommes proposé dans ce travail qui est : premièrement, de nous enquérir des moyens employés par Rembrandt pour développer cet art, en ce qui le concernait en particulier, et en tirer profit au point de vue professionnel ; secondement, et c'est là le point important, de savoir si l'œuvre considérable que nous avons sous les yeux est bien entièrement de sa main, ou si une partie de cet œuvre et laquelle doit plus probablement être attribuée à d'autres mains ; si, en un mot, ce trésor est sans alliage ou si, à un certain point, il n'a pas été quelque peu altéré par l'addition d'un métal plus vil. Personnellement, ainsi que nous l'avons donné à entendre au début de ce travail, nous déclarerons explicitement que nous ne croyons pas que tout dans cet œuvre soit de la main du maître ; que, depuis bien des années et au fur et à mesure que notre connaissance de cet œuvre est devenue plus intime, cette croyance s'est affermie ; enfin, que, grâce à l'occasion unique que notre exposition nous a offerte d'une nouvelle étude comparative d'ensemble, ce n'est plus seulement une croyance mais une conviction. Mais comment la faire partager aux autres ? Si tout ici n'est pas de la main de Rembrandt, quelle est celle qui a remplacé la sienne, ou, tout au moins, qui a eu une part dans le travail ? C'est là une des questions que le but de notre exposition était de soulever et que, dans ce travail fort imparfait, nous nous sommes efforcé de résoudre. Mais comment expliquer ce fait que ces eaux-fortes, dont nous nions en quelque sorte l'authenticité, sont toutes signées de Rembrandt, qu'aucun nom d'élève ne paraît sur aucune d'elles ? La situation, il faut le dire, est quelque peu embarrassante.

D'autre part, maintenant que nous avons classé ces pièces dans l'ordre de leur date de production, comment se fait-il, par exemple, qu'une eau-forte de 1633 ressemble si peu ou soit si inférieure à une autre portant la même date de 1633 ; que l'une, au premier coup d'œil, porte l'empreinte du maître, et l'autre non moins clairement celle d'un élève ? Il y a là conflit entre le sens critique et les faits, et comment les concilier ? En examinant les faits à nouveau ; et les faits, les voici. En 1630, ou vers cette époque, nous avons vu Rembrandt, sans clientèle, mais cependant en grande réputation déjà, prendre dans la Breedstraat, à Amsterdam, une maison de dimensions considérables pour un homme seul, à moins

être compris dans le cercle général de nos remarques, l'occasion de déduire ses motifs pour ne pas adopter la méthode de classification que nous proposons et dont l'exposition du Club est la première manifestation pratique. « Pour ranger les estampes d'un maître, dit M. Charles Blanc¹, il n'y a, ce nous semble, que deux méthodes : l'une consisterait à les classer selon leur date, de manière que l'on pût suivre les phases diverses du talent de l'artiste, ses commencements, ses progrès, son apogée, sa décadence, et une telle classification ne serait pas à coup sûr sans intérêt; l'autre méthode serait toute de raison; elle consisterait à rassembler les sujets homogènes et à les ranger philosophiquement par ordre d'importance, et pour ceux qui tiennent à l'histoire, par ordre chronologique. C'est le parti que nous avons adopté, pour deux motifs : d'abord un grand nombre de pièces de Rembrandt ne portant pas de date, il serait impossible d'en supposer une à celles qui n'en ont point; en second lieu, cet ordre serait, dans l'œuvre de ce maître, beaucoup moins curieux que dans celui de tout autre, parce que son génie ne présente aucune inégalité, aucune intermittence, depuis le début jusqu'à la fin de sa carrière de graveur, si bien que parmi tant de pièces, on n'en citerait guère qui se ressentent de l'inexpérience de la jeunesse ou de la faiblesse de l'âge avancé². D'ailleurs l'œuvre de Rembrandt est si varié, qu'un classement suivant la date des eaux-fortes, présenterait une confusion désagréable et souvent choquante. Telle fantaisie un peu trop libre semblerait monstrueusement déplacée à côté d'un sujet tiré de l'Évangile. Il a donc fallu renoncer absolument à ce genre de classification. »

FRANCIS-SEYMOUR HADEN.

1^{er} mai 1877.

1. *L'Œuvre complet de Rembrandt*. Paris, 1859, tome I, pages 7 et 8.

2. Nous trouvons au contraire qu'il y a une différence très marquée de style et d'exécution dans les eaux-fortes des différentes périodes de la vie du maître.





THE RELATIVE CLAIMS OF ETCHING AND
ENGRAVING TO RANK AS FINE ARTS,
AND TO BE REPRESENTED AS SUCH IN THE
ROYAL ACADEMY OF ARTS.

BY

FRANCIS SEYMOUR HADEN, F.R.C.S.,

PRESIDENT OF THE SOCIETY OF PAINTER-ETCHERS.

A Paper read before the Society of Arts, Wednesday, May 30th, 1883.

With Eight Illustrations.

London :

METCHIM AND SON, 20, PARLIAMENT STREET, S.W., AND
32, CLEMENT'S LANE, E.C.

—
1883.

Price One Shilling.

Marion H. Piehman,

from

G. Seymour Haden.

April '84

THE RELATIVE CLAIMS OF ETCHING AND
ENGRAVING TO RANK AS FINE ARTS,
AND TO BE REPRESENTED AS SUCH IN THE
ROYAL ACADEMY OF ARTS.

BY

FRANCIS SEYMOUR HADEN, F.R.C.S.,

PRESIDENT OF THE SOCIETY OF PAINTER-ETCHERS.

A Paper read before the Society of Arts, Wednesday, May 30th, 1883.

With Eight Illustrations.

London :

METCHIM AND SON, 20, PARLIAMENT STREET, S.W., AND
32, CLEMENT'S LANE, E.C.

1883.

Price One Shilling.

THE RELATIVE CLAIMS OF ETCHING AND ENGRAVING TO RANK AS FINE ARTS.

I.



ALL forms of engraving on metal, whether by the etching needle, the burin, by mezzotint, or aquatint, or whatever other forms the artist may choose as a means of original expression, are to be understood, for the purposes of the present paper, as included in the common term "etching;" and like forms, when not used for the purposes of original expression, as included in the common term "engraving."

It will thus be seen, that the object of the paper is not to contrast etching as a *process*, with engraving as a process,—the etched line with the engraved line,—and to say of one that it is better as a form of art expression than the other, though this thesis might well be maintained; and certainly not, in any sense that can be considered in the least personal, to exalt one class of artist at the expense of another; but to compare, without regard to the process employed or the person employing it, the *practice* of the painter-etcher who is an original artist, with the practice of the modern engraver who is not an original artist, and, by the discussion which it is hoped will follow such comparison, to arrive at an intelligible conclusion as to the comparative claims of the two to be considered branches of "fine art."

Nor can such an inquiry be considered, in any sense, either impertinent or unnecessary, since etching, though an

original art with a great history is without representation in the Royal Academy, while engraving, which is not an original art is fully represented there; and since, without such representation, no art, however legitimate, can live among us, and no artist, however meritorious, thrive. I think it proper to say, at once, therefore, that it is an object of this paper not merely to suggest an interesting inquiry but to test the reasonableness of this position.

Before such a comparison can be made, however, it is obvious that a *consensus* of opinion must first be established as to the nature of the conditions which constitute an art, as well as of the principles which regulate and control those conditions; and also, as to the nature of those special conditions which elevate an art, commonly so-called, to the rank and dignity of a "fine art."

It would be difficult, perhaps, to find any English word of the same dimensions which in its various applications covers so much disputable ground, and as to the precise logical value of which so much confusion exists, as this little word "art;" for art in the abstract is not art in the concrete, nor are "art" and "the arts" the same thing; while there is a point at which that which may properly be called an "art," and that which is really only an "industry," may well be matter of opinion.

This being so, the shortest and, perhaps, the only way to re-establish the order of ideas the confusion of which is here recognised, and to determine what art is, is to decide, in the first place, what it is not. Thus, art, it may be advanced as a negative proposition, is not manufacture—is the reverse, that is to say, of manufacture; the "*arts et métiers*" of the French, and the "arts and manufactures" of the English, being common statements of the antithesis here implied; and though neither term is used correctly (since *métier* means mystery or mastery, and is applicable to an art as well as

to an industry, while manufacture means something which is made by the hand while we understand it as a product of the loom) still, as embodying a well-defined distinction consecrated by usage, the expression may, I think, well be allowed.

In what, then, does an Art differ from a Manufacture?

An art differs from a manufacture in this, that, though it depends on agencies which are more or less material for its outward expression, yet those agencies are of a simple kind and are wholly directed by an impulse which has its seat and centre in the brain of the artist. Invest any one of those simple agencies—the brush of the painter, the pencil of the designer, the chisel of the sculptor, the needle of the etcher, the knife of the surgeon, the pen of the poet,—invest, I say, any one of these simple agents with any of the properties of the machine—render them, that is to say, in any degree automatic, so as to make unnecessary and place in abeyance the brain impulse just spoken of—and you will have, as a result of such agency, not an art but a manufacture. Or, it may be, by a sort of marriage of the two conditions, there may result a something which is less than an art and more than a manufacture—that thing, in short, which has come to be called an “art manufacture.” Well, I can see no objection to this term, since, by the infusion of beauty into it even a tombstone may be a work of art, as it was in the time of the Romans, and a *pot au feu*, as in that of the Etruscans; while the habit of seeing artistic forms everywhere and ugly forms nowhere, to which art expressed in manufacture conduces, is the probable simple explanation of the universality of the art faculty which we recognise in the Greeks.

A “principle of an art,” again, is that condition, or one of those conditions, which, by common consent, is admitted to be necessary to its healthy existence.

If, therefore, art is the brain impulse which it is here assumed to be (and this reading of it is confirmed by Johnson when he defines it to be something which is not taught), it clearly follows that the first great fundamental principle of art must be personality—originality ; out of which, again, come ideality, invention, sensibility to external impressions of form colour and composition, (which is a sense of the beautiful), passion, poetry, and whatever else the mind of the artist is capable of. Not that the practice of, and even a certain proficiency in, special branches of art, suppose the possession, as of necessity, of all these great qualities ; one of them, however, I venture to affirm is necessary, and that one is the principle of Originality.

Now it is only necessary to apply this principle to the practice of the older and the modern engraver, to determine the essential difference between the two, and, as it happens, this difference is also susceptible of demonstration. If, for the purpose of such demonstration, I take, therefore, some well-known engraving—some generally accepted example of the perfection of the engraver's art—such, say, as Sharp's engraving of Sir Joshua Reynolds's "Holy Family," and some equally well-known etching, such as Rembrandt's "Three Trees," Durer's "Erasmus," or Vandyck's "Vostermans," and project upon the screen, as I now do, analogous portions of them, so as to contrast, say, the foreground of one with the foreground of the other, the drapery of one with the drapery of the other, the flesh of one with the flesh of the other ; such demonstration will, I think, plainly show that, while the etcher, under the influence of brain impulse and in the full exercise of his volition, engraved as he felt, and allowed himself as he did so the utmost latitude and variety of expression ; the engraver, animated by no such impulse and deprived of his volition, is driven to express himself by signs and *formulæ* which, as art expressions, have no

intelligible meaning. I might, of course, have found, for the purpose of this comparison, modern engravings and modern etchings which would have furnished even a more striking contrast of the difference of practice here referred to; that I have not done so will be at once understood. If, also, I show engravers' work first, it is because, in order that the technical difference between the two may be seen, I must take as a standard of comparison that one of the two with which the greatest number of persons are most familiar, and that one happens to be engraving.

Here then is the engraver's *formula* for foreground? It is not, as you see, in the least like foreground, or anything which commonly enters into the composition of a natural foreground, and yet it is the pattern—I can think of no other term—which is used for foreground in nine engravings out of ten, I might almost say of nine hundred and ninety-nine out of a thousand. If the engraver had had the least idea of a foreground in his mind, he could never have done it; that he did do it, therefore, may, I think, be taken as a proof that he had no such idea—in other words that the mind had no active part in its production. Contrast this, now, with an equal portion of foreground taken from an etching by Rembrandt. It is, indeed, but an indication, yet every stroke of it proves that the ordinary components of a landscape foreground, grasses, rushes, and even flowers, were present to the mind of the artist as he did them; that his intelligence, that is to say, was awake, his sense of beauty excited, and that both were in active use as a means to the end he intended. In the case of the engraver, there is no sign of any such mental activity, and, therefore, as a necessary result, no art. Figs. 1, 2.

Here again is the *formula*, by which, as a rule, the engraver expresses flesh. It is still more curious. It consists, as you see, of a number of curved lines parallel to each other and drawn in the sense of the contour of the object which they are

intended to represent, each line being broken into short segmental portions of equal length, with a well defined dot between every two. That object happens to be part of the cheek of the Virgin. The shadow which determines the rotundity of the part is produced, not by any attempt at drawing such as an artist would have used, but simply by a thickening or thinning of the line and an enlargement or lessening of the dot, as the case may be, while the moderate lights are determined by the sparseness of these dots, and the highest by their total omission. Take, now, an etched head by Rembrandt of himself; the planes of the face, it will be seen, are expressed, not by any sort of *formula*, but by the same power of simple drawing which distinguishes the rest of the head, while the accuracy of the drawing is vouched for by the fact that it suffers nothing by an enlargement of from one inch, which is the size of the etching, to fifteen feet, or thereabouts. Vandyck, in his own head, and in that of "Vostermans," obtains his end in the same simple fashion, while in the "Pontius" may be seen the vigour and learning of the etcher subdued and corrected—sweetened is the technical term—by the engraver. Figs. 3, 4.

Drapery, again, is suggested by lines of unequal thickness, one being very thick and the next one very thin, in wavy parallelism and also drawn in the direction of the contour of the folds, the planes being suggested by a few cross strokes here and there, the same pattern as before being in constant use. With the painter-engraver, on the contrary, who in this case happens to be Durer, every fold is a labour of love, and is made out by work which suggests nothing but what it is meant to be. Moreover, the work is like himself—is like Durer—and nobody else. Figs. 5, 6.

Engraver's stems, trees, and foliage are subject to the same observation, whereas the etcher does his best to give not merely the fact, but, without being in the least servile, the

rugosities of the bark and what may be called the behaviour of the tree. The example here shown, which is one out of the three trees in Rembrandt's etching of that name, is, in the original etching, three inches high. Here it is fifteen feet or more, and yet it loses nothing but rather gains by the enlargement: and this reminds me to say, in deference to an objection that has been taken, that the enlargements here shown have not, in every case, been made by the photographer on exactly the same scale, that such exception is absolutely without force, the enlargement being simply made that the *technique* of the work may be seen at a distance; unless, indeed, which is true, that the more you see of an unintelligent line the less intelligible it becomes, and the more you see of an intelligent line the more intelligible—in other words, that if the engraver's line, in proportion as it is exaggerated, becomes less and less like the thing it is meant to be, the etcher's line becomes more so. Figs. 7, 8.

Now, I would respectfully submit that this strange departure from all forms of natural representation on the part of the engraver, and his adoption in their place of a set of *symbols* which he learnt in his apprenticeship and which he will transmit to his successors, and which in no respect differ from the symbols employed by the heraldic engraver in which certain lines stand for *gules*, certain others for *azure*, and others for *sable*, can only be explained by the fact that his task is a mechanical one, and that the brain impulse necessary to the exercise of the creative faculty, and therefore of the art faculty, is in abeyance. True, it must not be forgotten, and may in fairness be objected, that all lines employed in art are but conventional expressions, and, since there is no such thing as a line in nature, that the line of the etcher is fully as conventional an expression as that of the engraver. Yes; but there is this difference between the two, viz., that the line of one is an intelligent line—an intellectual means to an in-

tellectual end—and that the line of the other is not. And another fact which plainly grows out of this difference in the intellectuality, if I may use such a word, of the two things, and which seriously affects, of course, their relative art value, is that, while the work of the etcher has an identity of its own so that we recognise at once an etching by Rembrandt or an etching by Vandyck, one engraving, as a rule, is like another. This statement has been vehemently contested, yet it is a statement the accuracy of which any one who possesses half-a-dozen engravings, and half-a-dozen original etchings, may test for himself; and the exception, moreover, when it is met with proves the rule, for there are, or rather there have been, engravers who have not at all times, and as a matter of course, condescended to this sort of mechanism. Pontius, Bolswert, Vostermans, and the earlier reproductive engravers who followed Vandyck, were of this category, and so, in fact, were Nanteuil, the Drevets, Masson, and the great portrait engravers of the French school. But these men, following, as they did, closely on the heels of the painter, and being not unfrequently called upon to interpret his indications rather than copy his work, were themselves to some extent original artists, and, as such, had no need to employ, and in fact instinctively avoided, a *technique* which was not their own. Yet even of these, it must be said, that when not so engaged, and when engaged merely in copying—so soon, that is to say, as the act of interpretation ended with them and that of translation began—they also fell into exactly the same mechanism.

The essential differences between etching and engraving may, therefore, be described as of two kinds—differences of principle, and differences of *technique*—and these again be expressed, not inaptly, by some such *formula* as the following :—“ Etching depending on brain impulse, is personal, and the creative faculty being chiefly engaged in it, invention,

sensibility, and the various attributes which make up the sum of genius, belong to it and constitute it an *art*. Engraving being without personality—except such as may be supposed to be evolved in the act of copying or translating the work of another—originality, and all the attributes which attend the exercise of the creative faculty are absent from it, and constitute it a *métier*." There is, I submit, no escape from this position.

II.

All forms of engraving, then, whatever the processes employed in their production, divide themselves necessarily and naturally into two kinds, those which are original, and those which are not; those which, under the name of painter-engraving, or "etching," were practised by the great masters of painting who were their own engravers and by means of which we are able to obtain, even in this remote day, work as original as their painting at a comparatively moderate cost; and those by which, under the common term of "engraving," the design of the painter is reproduced upon the plate by other minds and other hands.

The workers employed in each of these two kinds of engraving are sub-divisible again into two distinct groups, the group of "Painter-engravers, or Etchers," who flourished with Durer and with Rembrandt, and a class of workers in the same direction and having the same art aims which has sprung up in this country within the last thirty years; and the group of "Reproductive Engravers," which divides itself, in like manner, into the class of "interpreters" and the class of copyists, or as they prefer to be called, "translators." A short notice of each of these is necessary.

The importance of the first of these groups, that of the painter-engravers or etchers of the older school, and which

greatly transcends that of the other groups, may be measured by their numerical strength and the number of their engraved works, by the great public collections of those works which have been made and are treasured in every museum in Europe, by the extent of the literature which has been devoted to their history and description, and by the keen competition which is excited for their possession when, as we have seen recently, they come into the market. It is an object of the present paper to suggest the claims which, under one or other of these heads, the group has upon the attention of the connoisseur.

Some, though but a faint, idea of the *personnel* of this the first of the two groups—that of the painter-engravers—of the kind of art they practised, of the schools they formed, the countries they inhabited, and of the nature, though not of the number, of the treatises devoted to their description (for the list here given represents but a tithe of them), may be gathered from the diagrams on the walls. Yet, strange as it may appear—and still stranger when it is considered that, taken collectively, those treatises and the works they describe represent the whole history of art at the best period of its existence—the study and enjoyment and collection of those works belong almost exclusively to the amateur, a sort of person that an academical friend of mine thinks ought to be put down.* The professional artist of the day, although it was not always so, as the marks of Reynolds and Lawrence on their acquisitions testify, as a rule, (which, however, is not without exception), knows little about them, and cares less. For all that, a treasury of knowledge is hidden away in them, a treasury so vast and deep that if, instead of the

* Mr. Horsley, R.A., in a recent address to the students of the Newton Abbot School of Art, is reported to have said that a searching inquiry ought to be made into the working of those Schools, which, like South Kensington, were giving aid and encouragement to this obnoxious class.

disjointed collections which, with so much labour and so little apparent consecutive purpose, they now get together from year to year, the Royal Academy would only open its doors to them and make a Winter Exhibition of them, they might show us and themselves, at a glance, the whole story of art. Moreover, seeing what has been done in this direction by the fathers of engraved art, and comparing what they see with what is being done now by the academician engraver, who knows but their hearts as well as their eyes might be opened, and even their hands go out to those more original engravers, the etchers, who, for the best part of a generation, have been doing their best to emulate the practice of their great prototypes, and who, during the whole of that time, they have been ostentatiously keeping at arm's length? Quite seriously, if I might venture to do so, I would suggest to the Academy that it could not do better than systematise its exhibitions of the Old Masters by a comprehensive exhibition of their Etched Works, because such an exhibition, over and above the inherent interest which it would possess, would furnish a key to all future exhibitions, just as drawings and models furnish a key to the pictures of which they are the first thought. Nor would they meet with any trouble in making a proper catalogue of its contents, seeing that such catalogues are ready made to their hands without a single mistake of any consequence to disfigure them, while the diagrams attached to this paper would furnish them with a hint of the order which might usefully be given to such an exhibition.

Turning now to the second class of this group, the class of modern original engravers, the Etchers—the pariahs of the Academy—they consist of a number of persons some of them painters, and some of them artists seeking to make a profession out of Original Engraving, who, in the belief that a return to that art in its pure forms is still possible, have formed themselves into a society for its promotion. This

association, under the name of the Society of Painter-Etchers, and which, though with a much more serious purpose, has supplemented the old Etching-Club, consists, at present, of about a hundred original engravers who meet once a year to exhibit their works, observe progress, and comment on the ostracism to which they are being subjected by the Royal Academy. Their idea being that a return to the original form of engraving as it was practised by the great masters of painting would be an advantage to art, their wonder is that such an idea should meet with no encouragement in an Academy of Arts. They go even further, and think that they have a right to be represented in such an Academy, and that the present Academy in excluding them is not true to its mission. Another peculiarity of the Society is that, unlike the academician-engraver who employs an assistant to execute his plates and carry them up to what is called "a first proof," its members do their plates themselves—that is to say, prepare them, think them out, execute them, and, not unfrequently, even print them, to which end many of them, like the engravers of old, have printing presses in their houses. Finally, they have no connection with any trades' union, such as the "Printsellers' Association," do not make or sell, under deceitful stamps and delusive differences of lettering, false proofs, and, on the whole, go to bed at night and get up in the morning with a clear conscience.

The second group—the group of engravers who are not original artists, and whose occupation it is to reproduce on their plates the designs of others—divides itself, in like manner, into two classes—the class of the great extinct "Interpretive"-engraver, of whom I shall make honorable mention presently, and the class of the "copyist" or "Translator"-engraver, of which the academician-engraver of the day is the surviving type.

I have had many pleasant relations with him. He is not as a rule an educated artist, but he has done good work in his time by reproducing for us, albeit in a sadly mechanical fashion, memoranda of great models which would not otherwise have come down to us. He is, besides, a Royal Academician—a dignitary of art—of whom, lest I should be accused of making “an attack on the Royal Academy” (which, by-the-bye, is the stereotyped phrase for the expression of any difference of opinion which a thinking man may honestly have with that masterful body) I prefer to maintain an absolute silence. Besides, *de mortuis nil nisi bonum*. A mechanical engraver greater than he—a better “translator” and even a better “interpreter” of the work of the painter—has arisen, with whom he will find it in vain to compete. His academic preponderance, hold on to it as he may, will in the end avail him nothing. His great automatic rival, the sun, will outshine him at last. He is ill past redemption, and the plaintive offer of a prize for his recovery—for the restoration of the great English school of line engraving—which I gather from the speech of the President at a recent dinner of the Academy is to be its object, will do nothing to revive him.* The only fault I have to find with him, therefore, and with the body of which he is a part, is that being moribund and contributing little or nothing to art, or at best nothing better than that which we saw on the screen, he should be holding his position to the damage and exclusion of his more original rival, and, by means of the opportunities afforded him by that position, be depriving him of his due share of academic representation. His right to this

* It is difficult to see, in presence of a reproductive process so successful as that of “Photo-gravure,” the object to be gained by the maintenance in his present position of the line engraver. I observe, even, that the President of the Academy, in the reproduction of his picture of “Wedded,” has had recourse not to the engraver but to this process.

exclusive occupation, and the power of obstructive oppression which it gives him, as well as the right of the Academy to invest him with that power and uphold him in it, I respectfully challenge. Year after year, for now upwards of twenty-five years, original etchings and engravings, many of them destined to live when much of the mechanical steel-plate engraving of the day shall have been forgotten, have been sent to the Academy, to be, if not turned out again, thrust into corners, and hung without order or distinction among engraved *réchauffées* and what may not improperly be called the odds and ends of the exhibition. In no single instance during the whole of that time has the slightest notice or encouragement been given to any one of them; while, in opposition to the best traditions of the Academy which repudiate the unoriginal artist in any other shape, the mechanical engraver—the adapter of other men's work to purely commercial purposes—has been accorded its fullest honours, and even put upon the council, whence, if so minded, he may effectually stamp out the efforts and mar the fortunes of his more legitimate rivals. That the ostracism here complained of has the approval of the more enlightened members of the Academy—several of whom are etchers, and more promising to become so—is not suggested for a moment. Still the fact remains, and it is no palliation of that fact to say, as has been somewhat unhandsomely said, that the complaints justly and necessarily and repeatedly made of it imply an attack on the Royal Academy. Meanwhile, and notwithstanding the discouragement he has met with, it is the humble belief of the writer of this paper, that the efforts which he and others have now been making for so many years have been in the true interests of art the artist and the public, and he will even add, of the Royal Academy itself. Of art, since, if his views were accepted, it would restore to every branch of it that inestimable quality of originality which, as has been shown,

is its first principle ; of the artist, since it suggests to him a ready and legitimate means of extending his reputation, increasing his income, and insuring for his work a more painter-like representation than it gets at present ; and of the public, by giving them, instead of art furniture, something to hang on their walls capable of exciting their interest, elevating their taste, and speaking to their intelligence. Nor to the Royal Academy itself, as representing the profession of art, has the service rendered by the much-abused amateur been less obvious, since, by spreading a love of art and some understanding of it among classes hitherto unpenetrated by it (as is, for instance, being done systematically, and at their own expense, by the Burlington Fine Arts Club) he promotes the office of the painter, enlarges his market, and becomes the remote if not the proximate, cause of that increase in his fortunes which is a phenomenon of the age. To deride and discredit him, therefore, is, to say the least of it, an unintelligent mistake. Nor, considering that, before the great tempter in the shape of the dealer came to him, it was to the amateur—the lover of art for art's sake—that he looked for the sale of his work, is the present attitude of certain painters towards him either generous or becoming.

And there is yet another thing that members of the Royal Academy, jealous of its honour, should not forget while considering the question suggested by this paper, and that is that, by persistently refusing till too late to recognise the claims of the great school of English water-colour painting, it is indirectly responsible for its present decline, and directly responsible for the painful fact that such men as David Cox, Peter de Wint, Copley Fielding, W. Hunt, and Samuel Palmer, lived and died outside its walls. It is no excuse for this shortsighted instance of neglect and injustice to say that, the charter of the Royal Academy, being founded in oil, no room can be found in it for the painter in water-colour. All that

can be said to that is, that it ought not to be founded in oil, but on art; and, again, not on one, but on every form of art which may properly be considered "fine art." Suppose, as a *reductio ad absurdum*, it had been founded on water—then the fresco painters would be at the top, and the oil men nowhere. How would they like that?

III.

The time, then, would surely seem to have come when, on the simple ground that the material employed in art production has nothing to do with art, the etchers and the water-colour painters, now refused representation in the Royal Academy, may reasonably demand it; and if, by the charter of the Academy as it now stands, such reasonable representation cannot be accorded them, then that a charter so little in accord with the intelligence and wants of the age should be altered, and the irrational monopolies which it sanctions and protects, done away with. In the French *salon* the art of engraving is divided into two classes, "L'eau forte" and "La Gravure," and a distinct representation given to each. On what reasonable ground does the Royal Academy refuse a distinct representation of this kind? To persist in such refusal is surely to remain behind the age, and to justify to the fullest extent every word which is here written.

The question, however, after all, is not altogether what the Royal Academy, impenetrable in its irresponsibility, may or may not choose to accept as forms of art worthy of its encouragement, but which of the two existing forms of engraved art—that which is original, or that which is not—has the most legitimate claim, outside the walls of the Academy, to be considered "fine art." That question, I cannot but think, has been fairly put and fairly answered in the present paper.

Mr. HADEN said he must certainly be included, but he had been thinking more of the earlier painters when making out the list. At the same time Hogarth was not an etcher. He engraved his pictures in a formal way, and very much on the same principle as an engraver of the present day would do, and, moreover, received considerable assistance in doing so. There was also an absence of spontaneity in them; in fact the modern form of engraving had fairly begun before his time, and he, to a great extent, and for a commercial purpose, adopted it. Turner was also an original engraver or etcher, but his etchings, admirably as they suited their purpose, were little more than the backbone to engravings made by other hands; to give these engravings force, character and quality, he etched them with the strong line that is seen in the *Liber Studiorum*. His etchings, in fact, were not done by Turner with a view to an ultimate end as works of art, complete in themselves, but merely to strengthen the work of the mezzotint engraver.

The CHAIRMAN regretted there was no one present who felt inclined to take the other side of the question. With reference to events which had recently been happening in another part of the world, he had made the remark that in fighting there were two dangers, one, that of not beating your enemy sufficiently, and the other of beating him out of existence altogether, so that there was no one left to make a treaty with. This was somewhat the case with Chili and Peru, and he was afraid Mr. Haden's paper had had the same sort of effect. It was so conclusive that there was no possibility of making any fight against it. That being the case, he had only the pleasant duty of proposing a hearty vote of thanks to Mr. Haden for his excellent paper.

The vote of thanks was carried unanimously.



ENGRAVER'S FLESH.

Enlarged Two Diameters.

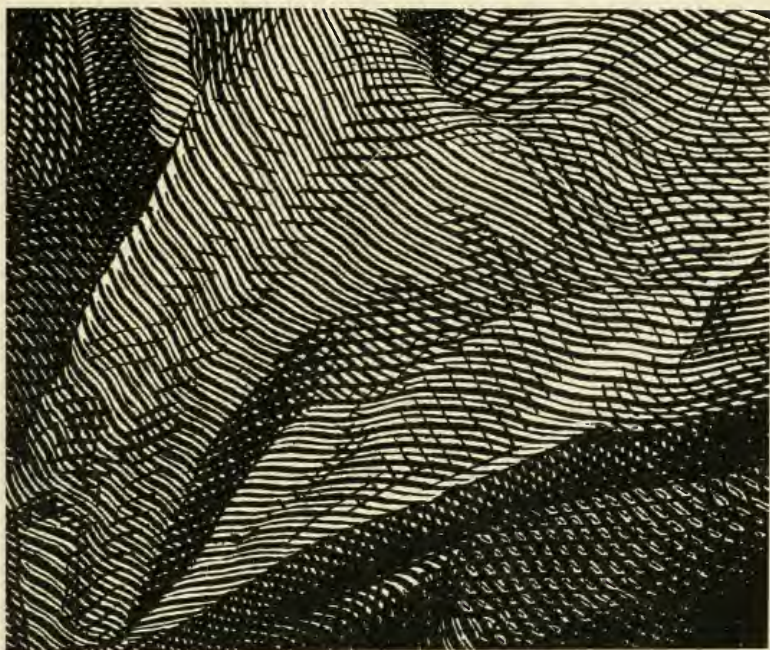
Fig. 3. Page 10.



ETCHER'S FLESH.

Enlarged Two Diameters.

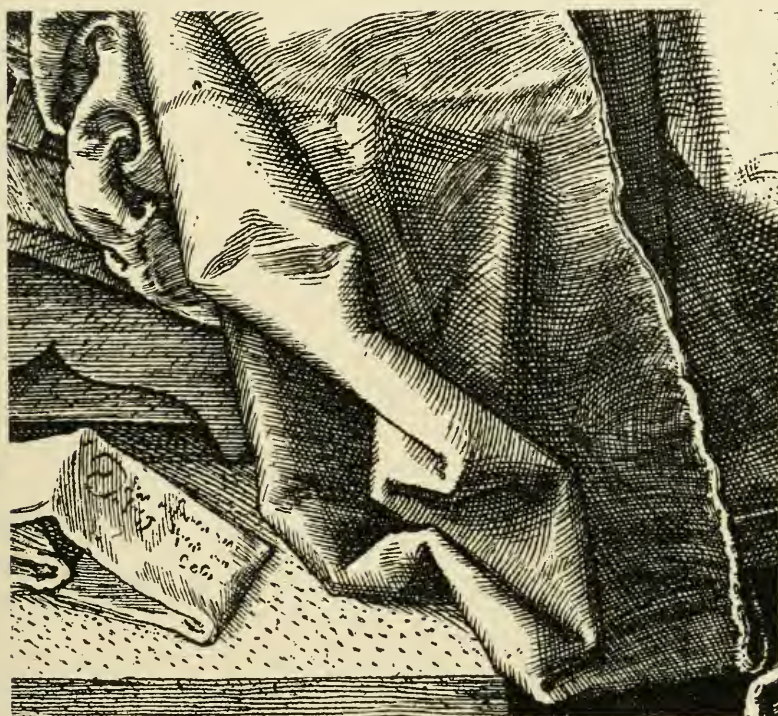
Fig. 4. Page 10.



ENGRAVER'S DRAPERY.

Fig. 5. Page 10.

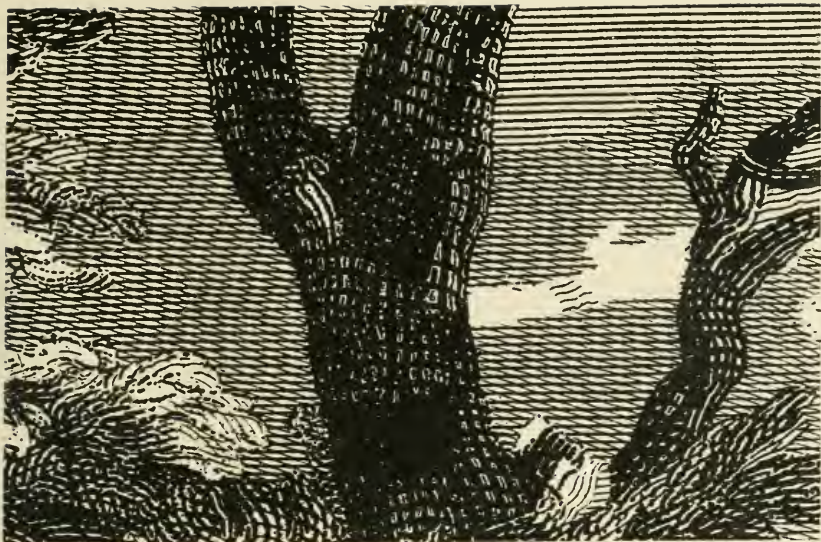
Enlarged Two Diameters.



PAINTER-ENGRAVER'S DRAPERY.

Fig. 6. Page 10.

Enlarged Two Diameters.



ENGRAVER'S STEMS, FOLIAGE AND SKY.

Fig. 7. Page 11.

Enlarged Two Diameters.



ETCHER'S STEMS.

Fig. 8. Page 11.

Enlarged Two Diameters.

AN ADDRESS

TO THE STUDENTS OF

THE WINCHESTER SCHOOL OF ART,

DECEMBER 4, 1888,

BY

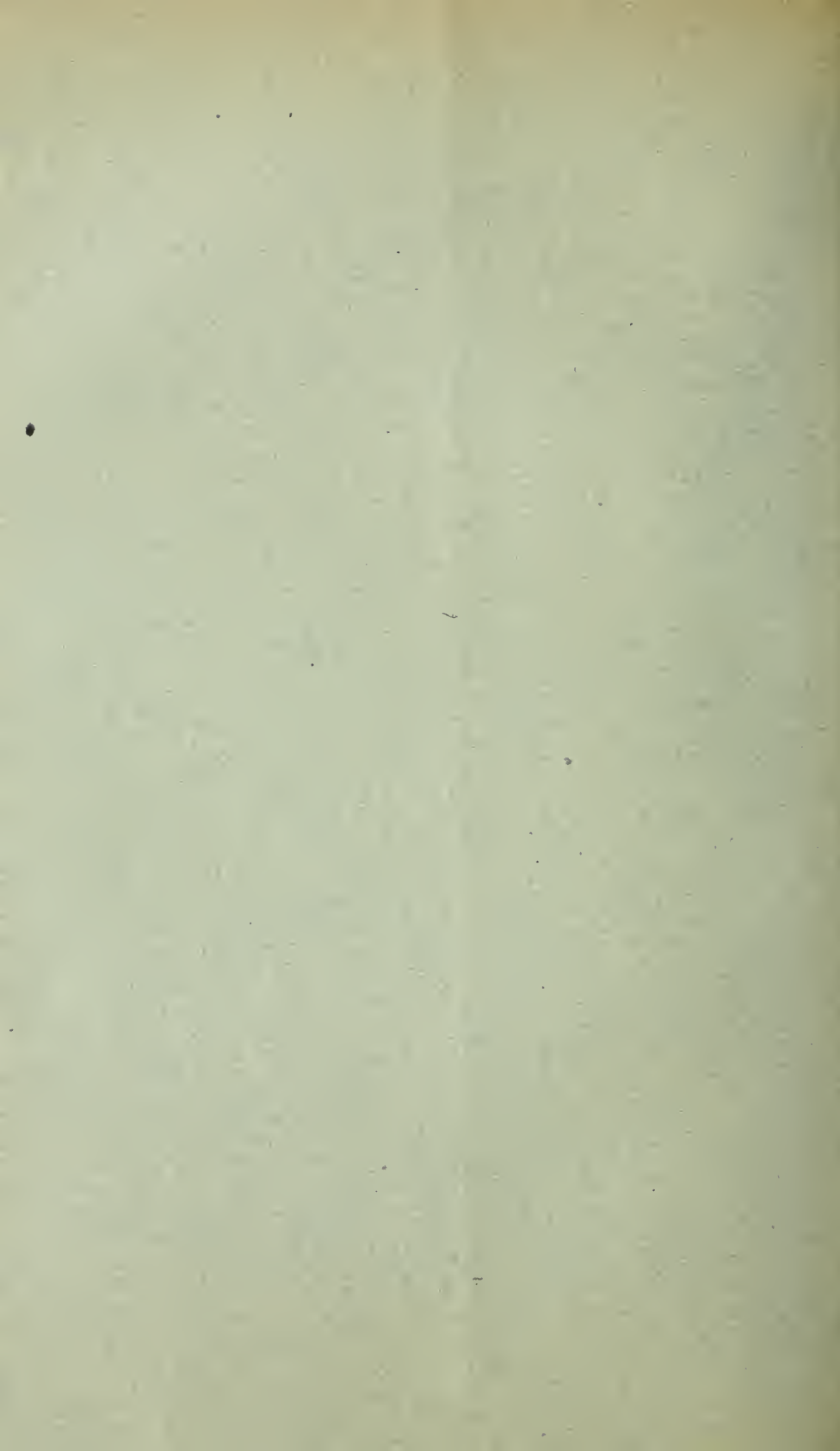
FRANCIS SEYMOUR HADEN, ESQ.,

President of the Royal Society of Painter-Etchers, &c.

WINCHESTER : MESSRS. JACOB AND JOHNSON.

Price Sixpence.

All Rights Reserved.



AN ADDRESS

TO THE STUDENTS OF

THE WINCHESTER SCHOOL OF ART,

DECEMBER 4, 1888,

BY

FRANCIS SEYMOUR HADEN, ESQ.,

President of the Royal Society of Painter-Etchers, &c.

WINCHESTER: MESSRS. JACOB AND JOHNSON.

Price Sixpence.

All Rights Reserved.

NOTE.

No disrespect is intended to the profession of Art in what is said at page 5 of this Address. What is there advanced amounts to no more than a regret that a foundation of something like a liberal education is not as much insisted on in the case of the professional Artist and future Academician as is insisted on in that of the more regularly constituted professions. Some knowledge of History, of the Natural and Applied Sciences, and of the "Belles Lettres," would seem to be as necessary to the painter as to educated people in general, and in the case of the Royal Academician, whose position and functions are in some sort administrative, perhaps peculiarly so.

STUDENTS OF THE WINCHESTER SCHOOL OF ART,—
Thinking over what I might most usefully say to you this evening, and looking at a School of this kind as a mixed body pursuing a common object, indeed, but probably with different aims, it occurred to me to ask Mr. Furley, the Honorary Secretary of the School, to give me such an insight into its composition as would let me know how many of you were contemplating the practice of art as a profession, how many of you were thinking of carrying the art knowledge you have acquired here into other professions or other industries, and how many of you were engaged in the cultivation of art for its own sake as amateurs, my idea being to offer you such reflections on your studies in these various phases of their application as the opportunities of a long life and a keen interest in the subject enabled me to make. As to this Mr. Furley writes as follows:—

About 50 or 55 per cent. of the students of the School are amateurs merely. This class includes nearly all the lady students, who take lessons in drawing with a view of cultivating their taste for its own object only. Then about 45 per cent. mainly young men, learn drawing as being of use to them in their trade. We have a considerable number of these in such employments as builders' clerks and apprentices, architects' clerks, joiners and painters' apprentices, and also young people employed in clockmakers and jewellers' shops. One public spirited citizen, Mr. Pointer, yearly pays the fees of a large number of this class in whom he discerns a taste for drawing, and sends them to the School. Many of these stay many years with us, and do well. The third class you ask about, *i.e.*, the professional artist class, is hardly represented at all. We have one or two students, male and female, who are teachers by profession, who attend the School in order to add drawing to their other qualifications as teachers, but they never exceed 5 per cent. Finally we have now and again one student who goes on from us to South Kensington or elsewhere, and takes to art as his life's work, but there is none in the School at present whom I could certainly say would do so. The total numbers of the School are 180.

Now, I will say at once that though somewhat unprepared for the small reference made in this note to the professional element, I yet received the information which it conveys with considerable satisfaction, because, in my opinion it describes exactly what a provincial school of this kind, disseminating an interest in art in a

those degrees. Every one admitted to such a profession may, therefore, reasonably profess to be himself in possession of the amount of knowledge and skill certified to him by his degree. Such a profession is also called a liberal profession, not so much on account of the letters which it cultivates, as because the very nature of the studies which it prescribes conduces to liberality of thought and soundness of view, and to the consequent discouragement of all forms of narrow mindedness. As a matter of fact the so-called profession of art, as represented by the Royal Academy, provides no such guarantees, and is hedged in by no such safeguards. It exacts no proof of an acquaintance even with the rudiments of a liberal education, institutes no tests, confers no degrees, gives no licence to practice, and affords no protection against malpractice. Accordingly, it is competent to any one, even to an illiterate person, to say of himself "I am an artist," and, if he happen to have sold a picture, "I am a professional artist," and, having acquired his rank thus easily, to say of every one else "You are an amateur." Hence the anomalous privileges, too, which such a profession dispenses, and the disqualifications which it imposes; hence the singular circumstance that while the painter in oil is a Royal Academician the painter in water colour is not, and that while the unoriginal engraver is admitted to its highest honours, the original engraver (the painter etcher) is driven out to found an academy of his own. Hence also the *reductio ad absurdum*, that if Turner had done nothing but paint in water colour, and Rembrandt nothing but etch, neither would have been a member of such an academy.

THE AMATEUR.

And now we come to the amateur—the *οἱ πολλοί*, the plebs, the pariah of this system. He is, I admit, a difficult subject to deal with, and all the more difficult that the class to which he belongs is numerous, that his aspirations are good, and that, besides being generally an educated, he is often even a cultivated person. It will be observed that I speak of him as *him*. I am careful to do so. I could not—in fact I dare not, having something to say of him which is not wholly complimentary—do otherwise. He will see, however, as I get on and am able to say handsomer things of him, that I shall find an opportunity of slipping his fellow student of the other sex into his place, and so of avoiding the charge of an unpardonable impoliteness. Now what the professional artist says of the amateur is this:—He says that, as a rule, he is indifferent to, perhaps unconscious of, the higher and

a process, not of imitation but of ratiocination, or, more correctly, since it is half automatic, of cerebration, and then, when all is said and done, that your work to be worth anything must be your own.

THE ARTISTIC SPIRIT.

What then, it is now time to ask, is the amount and kind of previous knowledge and skill which you thus claim for the artist-amateur. It is the same that I have already claimed for the painter-etcher, and the sum of all I have been talking about. It is the artistic spirit without which all the study in the world is useless. It is the cultivation of that spirit. It is the knowledge that is acquired by a life of devotion to what is true and beautiful—by the daily and hourly habit of weighing what we see in nature, and the thinking of how it should be represented in art. The habit, in a word, of constant observation, and the experience that springs from that habit. The skill that grows out of these habits is the skill required by the artist *whatever his place in the field of art*. It is the skill of the analyst and of the synthesist—the skill to combine and the skill to separate—to compound and to simplify—to detach plane from plane—to fuse detail into mass—to subordinate definition to space, light, and air. Finally it is the *acumen* to perceive the near relationship that expression bears to form, and the skill to draw them—not separately, but together.

THE ETCHED WORK
OF
REMBRANDT:
TRUE AND FALSE.

A LECTURE

DELIVERED AT THE LONDON INSTITUTION, JANUARY 25TH;
IN THE GALLERY OF THE ROYAL SOCIETY OF PAINTER-
ETCHERS, APRIL 5TH; AND IN THE THEATRE OF THE OXFORD
UNIVERSITY MUSEUM GALLERIES, OCTOBER 31ST, 1895.

BY

SIR FRANCIS SEYMOUR HADEN, F.R.C.S., P.R.E., &c.

London :

MACMILLAN & Co.

1895.

[All Rights Reserved.]

Metchim & Son, London.

EXPLANATORY.

The following pages—with the addition, possibly, of a dozen lines rendered necessary by certain somewhat misleading statements in portions both of the home and continental Press—include the substance of a Lecture delivered on the 5th April, 1895, at the request of a number of critical friends and well-wishers who desired to have—together with some account of the Author's Rembrandt experiences and of the conclusions to which they had led him—an explanation of those statements. That explanation, however, he has considered will best be found in the Appendix to the English edition of his Monograph on the subject, which English edition he thinks it possible these writers have never seen. It may, therefore, now be had of the publishers in French as well as in English.

To make his present statement the clearer he has divided his Lecture into four heads, or chapters; one in which he describes the circumstances which led him, as early as in 1847-48, to doubt the genuine character of many of the Etchings commonly attributed to Rembrandt, as well as the means taken by him as a member of the Committee of the Burlington Fine Arts Club to render that doubt an accepted fact; another in which, by the aid of the screen, he seeks to demonstrate this fact; a third in which, by exposing the barbarous character and base origin of the Bartschian classification, he tries to disarm the opposition of those who still uphold it; and a fourth in which, by the valuable co-operation of the Authorities of the British Museum, he hopes to bring about its complete revision.

Meanwhile, the Lecture rests for its general foundation on the following facts:—(1) On repeated but informal representations made by the Author to the Committee of the Burlington Fine Arts Club immediately after the first Rembrandt Exhibition in the order of Bartsch, as to the necessity for a second Exhibition in the order of date of production; (2) On a formal application to the Committee by letter,

EXPLANATORY.

signed by the Author and the late Mr. Fisher, dated December 12th, 1876, to the same effect; (3) On a sketch in detail of the nature, objects and arrangement in chronological order, which the Author proposed to use as an introduction and guide to such Exhibition, submitted to the Committee in the early part of 1877; (4) On the acceptance of such "Introduction" by the Committee, and on their printing it for the use of the Club on the 1st of May of the same year; (5) On a reprint, in 1879, of that "Introduction" as a Monograph, with an Appendix; (6) And, finally, on a translation of that Monograph into French, in which the translator made the serious mistake, (unperceived at the time by the Author,) of omitting the notes of interrogation which, (in every case but one,) he had attached to the expression of his views in the English Edition; thereby committing him, in the eyes of the Continental reader, to statements which, however well founded, were not intended to be definitive.

*"Woodcote," Alresford, Hants,
April 5th, 1895.*

standing of his methods than was otherwise attainable. But it did more than that. The act of getting them together at all—the bringing of one print into actual contact with another of the same date—would, every now and then, even suggest a doubt as to whether both could be by the same hand—whether, though the design was unmistakably that of the master, the workmanship was equally so. As to this—and this is the second fact of importance I desire to impress upon you—I gradually came to the conclusion that it was *not*, and, after a time, that in the case of no small number of the so-called etchings by Rembrandt, the work of hands other than his was distinctly visible. This conviction, in fact, it was, which, frequently and openly expressed and insisted upon, ultimately brought about—at my instance indeed—that second exhibition of the works of Rembrandt, according to their date of production, in the Gallery of the Burlington Fine Arts Club which has since become matter of art history. By this exhibition, for the first time all who ran might read. It led also to the publication of the Monograph referred to, and this, again, being printed in French as well as in English, made the question raised by it a European one. More than this, it not only proved to the satisfaction of expert opinion that the views I had been so long endeavouring to establish were well founded—that is to say, that if A was by Rembrandt B could not be—but it showed at a glance differences in the *genuine* work of the master at different periods of his career and at different stages of his practice, which even led us to infer not a few details, till then unsuspected, of his domestic history.* It also disclosed to us the interesting fact that, dividing the thirty years of his etching career into three parts or decades, his plates during the first of these decades were for the most part etched—

* One of the most interesting of these details was the fact that, immediately after the death of his wife Saskia, and for several years afterwards, his etched work consisted chiefly of Landscape, and that in such quantity as to infer the probability of his having left Amsterdam.

before, from the second we derive nothing but a confirmation of that which we did know, and a knowledge of which, as I have said, we had obtained elsewhere—the knowledge, that is to say, that not a few of the so-called, and, till then, universally accepted etchings of Rembrandt, were not the work of his hand.

Let me, however, before I throw evidence on the screen of this at first contested but now admitted fact, advert for a moment to the mystery which, to a great extent, has obscured the etching career of Rembrandt, and which still leaves unexplained and open to discussion many of the details of that career. What, in the first place, it may be asked—and I have asked the question before*—prompted so great a painter, at that time full of commissions and who had just removed from Leyden to Amsterdam the better to deal with them, to give to etching so much of his time and attention? What was his object in taking in the Breedstraat a house† so much too large for his painting, and in fitting it up with those “cubicles” of which we read, and as to the purpose of which so much discussion has been expended? What, at the time of that removal, were his relations with two men, Livens and Van Vliet, neither of whom stood to him in the relation of master and pupil, but both of whom were engravers, and whose engraved work we discern, or think we discern, in so many of the etchings done, during the earlier period of his career, in Rembrandt’s studio? For my own part—and I say this with the greatest regret, for we are entering on a chapter in the history of the great master which all would gladly skip—I can see no reason whatever to accept the view which M. Michel, relying

* Monograph, p. 12.

† It matters not which house. Monograph, p.

the end of a great original art, and doubly regrettable that such an art was receiving its death blow at the hands and in the studio of its greatest exponent! I yield to no one in a readiness to see that, in all this, Rembrandt was probably but the figurehead of a project which had its origin and received its impulse at baser hands, and that the signature "*Rembrandt, inventor, et fecit cum privelegio*," to plates which he never touched, and the suppression on the same plates of all mention of their real executants, was at most but a legal fiction which, after all, was not as bad as the so-called "proofs" which we are invited to buy, and are weak enough every day to buy, at the invitation of the Printsellers' Association.

Meanwhile, for convenience of demonstration, I make out six distinct groups of what I have called these commercial plates, all of them belonging to the first ten years of Rembrandt's career, and the questionable features of which will readily declare themselves when I come to throw them on the screen, but which, notwithstanding, are still catalogued as genuine by Bartsch and all his followers, and, on their authority alone, still allowed a place in every Rembrandt collection, public as well as private, in Europe.

1. The first of these groups consists chiefly of Early Heads, as well as of a number of Beggars, which will be seen on comparing them with genuine plates to be by inferior hands.

2. The second, of a series of small plates evidently after pictures or compositions by Rembrandt, and all of them engraved apparently by the same hand, which however, is not the hand of Rembrandt.

3. The third, of a certain number of ambitious and, as to size, important plates, executed at about the same time and already described in the "Monograph" (pp. 24 to 29), which, till the Club exhibition, enjoyed a world-wide

reputation and commanded a large price, but which now, by common consent, are regarded not only as copies, but as copies in the correction of which Rembrandt had taken little or no appreciable part.

4. The fourth, of plates portions only of which are by Rembrandt, and the rest by assistants.

5. The fifth, of a certain number of later plates which, though by Rembrandt, are adaptations of, or founded on the designs of others.

6. The sixth, of plates—many of them landscapes—attributed without the least apparent warrant to Rembrandt, but which still figure as his in all collections arranged according to Bartsch's catalogue.

(Screen.) GROUP 1.

Compare, (as true Rembrandts of this group,) Bartsch 354, date 1628; B. 24, 1630; B. 16, 1631; B. 2; B. 23, 1634; B. 18, 1634; B. 131; B. 140; B. 129, 1635; B. 133, 1639; with the following, approximately of the same date, which are untrue, B. 355; 352; 375; B. 8, 25, 143, 252; B. 15, 1631; B. 3; B. 293; B. 360; B. 154 (and its, so called, first state); B. 135, 1631; B. 166; B. 167, 1631, (which is by Livens); B. 171, 1631; B. 175 (with its, so called, first state*).

(Screen.) GROUP 2.

Compare, (as true Rembrandts of this group,) B. 129, 1635; B. 99, 1639; B. 109, 1639; with B. 38, signed *Rembrandt van Ryn f. 1633*; B. 68, 1634; B. 100, 1634; B. 71, 1634; B. 37, 1638.

Examine, also, in connection with this group, B. 90, signed "*Rembrandt inventor et fecit, 1633*."

* It has not been thought necessary to set out in type the full titles of these prints; any one not present at the Lecture desiring to identify and study them, can, in fact, only do so by a direct reference to Bartsch's numbers.

(Screen.) GROUP 3.

Compare, (as true,) B. 81, "*Rembrandt f., 1633,*" together with a portion of the same, to show the work of the master in detail; with B. 81, (as false,) "*Rembrandt cum pryvl., 1633,*" together with a portion of the same, to show the work of the copyist. Also, B. 77, "*Rembrandt f. cum privele., 1636,*" (as untrue,) and a portion of the same to prove it.

Also, (in connection with this group, but anterior to it, as to date of execution, and as a plate obviously after a design by Rembrandt, though not by his hand, (?) examine B. 73, "*Rt. van Ryn f.*"

*I find, after careful consideration, that I have nothing to unsay of that which has already been said of these prints in the Monograph, pp. 25 to 29. I consider, that is to say, The Good Samaritan, though designed by Rembrandt, to be by the same hand as we see in the several plates which compose Group 2; that The Raising of Lazarus, though equally after a design by Rembrandt, is, in no part of it, his etched work; that Mariette was not the first, as has been stated, to throw doubt on the authenticity of The Descent from the Cross, or to throw doubt upon it at all; and, generally, that the "traditional" gossip of the Print-Room relied upon by its author has no better foundation than the famous Josi-Carpenter Story, which it was doubtless invented to support.**

(Screen.) GROUP 4.

As examples of this group see B. 44, 1634, B. 281, 1639; and B. 192, for copyist work, and also parts of the same left blank for additional work by Rembrandt; the explanation of these plates apparently being that Rembrandt, unable to tolerate any longer the vulgarities of Van Vliet and the copyists, determined in future to do the more important parts of them himself.

* Monograph, Appendix, p. 48.

Screen.) GROUP 5.

Compare B. 286, "*Rembrandt geretuc. 1635 ;*" B. 287 "*Rembrandt geretuckerdt ;*" and B. 288, "*Rembrandt geretuck. 1635,*" with plates of similar subjects by Livens, the word 'geretuckerdt' being clearly an acknowledgment by Rembrandt of his obligation to the originals of these etchings by Livens.

B. 56, without name or date, is, also, a like appropriation by Rembrandt of a plate by Hercules Seghers.

This plate as left by Seghers (who had just died) had originally little to recommend it, the foliage being mechanical, the biting clumsy, and the figures an exaggeration even of those in Count Goudt's drawing, from which Seghers had copied it. These defects Rembrandt sought to remedy, firstly, by the substitution of a group more in keeping, as to size, with the composition ; and, secondly, by covering the whole bitten work of the distance with drypoint, which both mellowed and harmonised it, and greatly added to its effect (Rev. atlas, B. 56), rendering it in fact a beautiful plate. This drypoint, however, owing to the rugged foundation on which it rested, soon wore off, so that no fine proofs are now known of it. Properly speaking, also, there are no 'States' of this plate, the changes made in it after it came into the hands of Rembrandt being mere press-side additions, made apparently as each consecutive proof was taken.

B. 104, without name or date (dite "dans le gout de Durer").

It is a complete mistake to suppose that there is anything in this plate, (one of the finest of Rembrandt's works,) to remind us of Durer, the subject being wholly Italian, with the introduction of the Saint and the lion in place of a Venus which occupied the foreground of a drawing by Titian. This drawing, the probable existence of which I used to prophesy, actually turned up at Dr. Wellesley's sale, and was, I think, but am not sure, bought by the late Mr. Locker-Lampson.

B. 60, "*Rembrandt f. 1654.*"—(The figures by Rembrandt, but the background probably after Titian or Campagnola.)

B. 63, 1654.—Observe that the principal figure, that of the Virgin, is wholly after Mantegna.

B. 107, 1657.—Are other instances of partial adaptation from Italian masters.

(Screen.) GROUP 6.

B. 31, 32, 59, 93, 95, 106, 108, 119, 127, 132, 135, 145, 146, 149, 295, 329, 331, 339, 350, 357, 360, and others, many of them landscapes, are so obviously false that it is needless to specify them.

III.

And now as to the cause of all this—of all these errors of attribution and of the mystery which, till the Club Exhibition came to dispel it, pervaded the whole story of Rembrandt's etching career—Who is responsible for it? How did it come about? I have never heard this part of the subject discussed, or any solution offered of it, or, indeed, any suggestion made that it was capable of solution. Yet, in my opinion, that solution is not far to seek.

We have only to remember that the earliest cataloguers of Rembrandt's etchings were not artists but print-sellers—tradesmen, that is, who simply arranged their wares in such a way as would best enable them to find them when wanted—portraits here, landscapes there, Scripture-pieces next, and so on, just as the haberdasher has one drawer for ribbons, another for gloves, and another for stay-laces. Then, that the systematic writers who followed them, having no prevision of the questions here raised, and *being themselves not necessarily either artists, etchers, or experts*, simply adopted their methods. And, finally, that the custodians and guardians of public collections—recognising possibly a certain responsibility for the maintenance of things as they found them, and whose freedom of action, in common

with all who hold official position, we know to be more or less circumscribed—hesitated to disturb an order which routine had sanctioned and usage made easy. None, however, know better than these gentlemen that, though in an æsthetic and educational sense, the classification of Bartsch is barbarous and misleading, yet that over three-parts of the Continent that classification is religiously upheld, and, in Germany especially, that any question of its fallibility would be looked upon as little less than an impiety and any attempt to supplant it as a form of temerity requiring prompt suppression. No one, I believe, in fact, is more alive to the incongruity of this position than the present erudite Keeper of the Prints in the British Museum (who, so to speak, has succeeded to it), or more ready, on cause shown, to abandon it. Meanwhile, the arrangement of Rembrandt's Etchings—if arrangement it can be called—in every museum in Europe, our own included, is this:—First, among the fine early heads of the master himself, come, mixed up with them and in inextricable confusion, the unspeakable vulgarities of Van Vliet, or, it may be, the childish crudities of some boy pupil, and next to these again, advanced portraits of Rembrandt's latest and greatest time—the circumstance of their being portraits being the sole warrant for such an arrangement. What, I would respectfully ask, can possibly be learnt by a disorder so complete—a dislocation of ideas so ingeniously contrived? Imagine, as a *reductio ad absurdum*, a catalogue of the animal kingdom framed on such a plan—heads here, tails there, and the body of the animal we are seeking to identify in another department! Seriously, to this simple cause, and to no other, belongs, in my belief, not alone the mystery and confusion attending the whole story of Rembrandt as an etcher, but—the critical and discriminating faculty being effectually put to sleep by it—the failure on the part of the cataloguer to recognise those differences of style and handling which determine the question of attribution.

To put the value of this belief, however, to the test. The first of these tradesmen-cataloguers was Gersaint, a Paris print-seller of the early third of the last century. Now Gersaint had bought of Houbraken, and Houbraken had bought of the executors of the Burgomaster Six, a collection—the collection—of Rembrandt's etchings, which, we are especially told, Six had himself acquired, print by print, "*à mesure qu'elle était achevée*," at the very hands of Rembrandt. Notice, please, the quotation, "*à mesure qu'elle était achevée*," because it exactly expresses the order for which I am pleading, and which, in my judgment, all such collections ought to have. Here, then, was a collection absolutely without parallel: as to impression, doubtless perfect: as to number, presumably complete: and as to *provenance*, altogether reliable. Now let us see what happened to it. That Gersaint rearranged it, shop fashion, we know, because his book shows it. That he died before he could print his book, we know, because Helle and Glomy, also print-sellers, in 1751 bought his MSS., and in printing it "added 41 pieces to it;" that Pierre Yver also, who in 1756 came after Helle and Glomy, "added many more," and finally, that, in the hands of Bartsch, these additions had become so numerous as to raise a Collection which originally might possibly have amounted to 200 plates to no less a total than 376! On what ground, I would again respectfully ask, were these successive additions made, and, being made, what is there to invest them with the authority which the countrymen of Bartsch claim for them, and which has, in fact, been held to justify their adoption—or rather, the adoption of the system which permits them—by every Rembrandt cataloguer from Gersaint downwards? By Claussin, that is to say, and by Daulby, in 1828; by Wilson, in 1836; by Charles Blanc, in 1853; by Middleton, in 1878; by Dutuit, in 1881; by Rovinski, in 1890; and by v. Seidlitz, in 1894 and 1895—this latter, even while admitting its barbarity, never-

theless insisting on its maintenance as the only workable system—the only system, that is, which the catalogue-maker, (according to him) is *competent* to deal with. To this admission I shall have to revert in the next edition of the Monograph. For the moment, by way of comment on a *dictum* in every way so damaging to the Bartschian pretension, I need only ask this simple question:—How is it, if the classification of Bartsch is the only workable one that no two of his followers have been able to agree even as to the proper sequence of the items which compose it? How is it, for instance, that Bartsch's No. 1, "*Rembrandt aux cheveux crepus*," becomes Middleton's 51 and Blanc's 204? That Bartsch's No. 2, "*Rembrandt a trois moustaches*," becomes Middleton's 106 and Blanc's 206? That Bartsch's No. 40, "*Le triomphe de Mordecai*," is Middleton's 228 and Bartsch's 12? That Bartsch's 90, "*Le bon Samaritan*," is Middleton's 185, Blanc's 41, Claussin's 94, Wilson's 95? etc.—in a word, that no two of these catalogues agree as to the prints they refer to. Surely there must be something radically wrong in a system which permits, and even requires to make it intelligible, such inconsistencies as these—a system with so little self-cohesion as thus to break down and crumble to pieces in every fresh hand that touches it! As to the arbitrary additions, again, with which it has been sought to strengthen it, but which have only still further weakened and discredited it, I find, as I expected, on going back to those made by Helle and Glomy, that only two, or at most three of them—though doubtless serviceable in their time as baits to the collector—are traceable even to the studio, much less to the hand, of Rembrandt.*

And this brings me, again, to a part of the subject which I would rather, but cannot, avoid. Of course I knew, when making up my mind to tell this story, that the disturbance

* These additions being marked by an asterisk are readily distinguishable.

it entailed would necessarily cause friction, and that, in the nature of things, there would be those who would not like it; that the collector who had given large sums for treasures which were treasures no longer, would dislike it; that the dealer, whose privilege it had been to dispense those treasures, would dislike it; that the manufacturer of imaginary "states," and the critic who had gone out of his way to extol them, would dislike it; that the systematic writer, whose province it invaded and whose conclusions it had anticipated, would dislike, and do his best to attenuate its importance; and, generally, that till the reconstruction it advocated had been fully accomplished, its unfortunate author would have anything but what the Americans call a good time of it. All this, I say, I had anticipated, and was prepared for. But what I was not prepared for was the declaration of so practical a writer as M. Rovinski—a writer, by the way, who has done good service by his spirited and costly concordance—that "*the artist was well-known to be the very worst judge of such things,*" and "that the arbitrary retrenchments he advocated should only be allowed on the production of *documentary* evidence of a nature to show, not only that Rembrandt had not done the spurious plates, but to *prove who had*"—as if a forged cheque was not documentary evidence of its own forgery, and a man found murdered by the roadside not a murdered man till you had found his murderer! And, again, that "what was good enough for Rembrandt ought to be good enough for us," and, "whether done by him or not, the mere fact of a plate having been done in his studio, (and, therefore, imbued with his spirit,) should exempt it from criticism." Really, one would almost suppose from such arguments as these that their authors had altogether lost sight of the relative art value of an original engraving and a copy: had forgotten that, from the year 1400 to 1650 or thereabouts—from the time, that is, of Mantegna to that of Rubens and Vandyke, during which the greatest paintings that the

world has seen were executed—the painter was his own engraver, and that the copyist engraver, as we now know him, had no existence: and further, that it is owing to our present keen recognition of the value of this fact that we are now the possessors of autographic engraved work such as the world never saw before, and will never see again unless the Royal Society of Painter-Engravers, whose object it is to restore it and make the engraver of the future an artist instead of a mechanic, should happily succeed in doing so. The tabular list which I have constructed, and now throw on the screen will at least serve to remind such writers of the importance in an æsthetic point of view of preserving in all its integrity an accurate and faithful record of these old Painter-Engravers—of the countries that produced them, the schools they formed, and the branches of art they practised. To take no account of them, to pretend that an etching *after* Rembrandt is as good as an etching *by* Rembrandt, is to set at nought our jealous care that no factitious examples of such work shall find its way into our cabinets, and practically to reduce the art value of such treasures to that of so much waste paper! I do not say that a certain allowance should not be made for the undoubted fact that these sophisticated plates were so far tolerated by Rembrandt as to have been issued with his sanction; I only say that the fact is a regrettable fact, and, because it is a fact, that we are not to be called upon to shut our eyes to it as some of my objectors would have us do. Nor have I ever said that, in our re-arrangement of his work, these spurious Rembrandts should be altogether ignored and no place assigned to them. On the contrary, what I have said is that, in any such re-arrangement, a recognised place *should* be assigned to them, but that such place should be *strictly defined*.

Turning, however, not without a certain sense of amused relief from objections such as these, and assuming for a moment the ungrateful *rôle* of objector myself, I must, I

fear, while admiring the great literary ability of M. Michel's recent voluminous contribution to Rembrandt literature, take serious exception both to the opinions it expresses and the advice it tenders. M. Michel, for instance, while condemning as trivial, fantastic and ill-drawn, more than one of Rembrandt's most important plates,* must forgive me if I demur to his recommendation that the future catalogue of Rembrandt's etchings should be entrusted to yet another eminent connoisseur. I, on the other hand, with the no small advantage of considerable practical experience, have declared that *none but an expert who has passed an apprenticeship at the press-side can safely undertake such a task*, and have instanced in proof of this the disjointed efforts of the cataloguers from Gersaint downwards. Here, then, a new departure of some kind would seem to be absolutely necessary, and, this being so, I would propose that, whenever the time comes for such new departure, the work should be undertaken, not by any single individual, however eminent, but by a commission of experts who, taking the chronological arrangement as the foundation of their labours, should represent the practical, as well as that other side of the question which, in the hands of the mere *littérateur*, has so signally failed.

IV.

Finally, Gentlemen, it only remains to me to repeat, and put on record before some piratical skirmisher snaps it up and prints it as his own, what I believe, and for many years have believed, to be the only remedy for all this confusion—that remedy being neither more nor less than a simple repetition on a complete scale of the necessarily incomplete and insufficient exhibition of the Burlington

* See his criticisms on "The Triumph of Mordecai," "The Burial of our Lord," and "Christ Preaching."

Fine Arts Club. This complete exhibition, indeed, you will be glad to hear, for the credit of English expertism, Professor Colvin has undertaken to carry out in the great chamber now attached to the Print Room of the British Museum, a room in which it will be easy to hang in the actual juxtaposition of the true with the false—a juxtaposition which I repeat is necessary to the success of the undertaking—the whole etched work of Rembrandt. Who will not come to see and profit by such an exhibition—to read and be convinced by a great story thus graphically told! If none of those, alas, whom we met with in the early stages of this lecture and whose information—it may be whose confessions—would have done so much to confirm or correct our conclusions. If not that one of the brothers Houbraken who could have told us all we wanted to know of the number and order of that unique Collection which Gersaint was the first to tamper with and Helle and Glomy to adulterate. If not the colourless and respectable Adam Bartsch, who, thinking no evil, accepted, added to, and perpetuated those adulterations, and in thus perpetuating them did more to sully the fame of Rembrandt than the veriest Van Vliet that ever found his way into his studio. If, I say, we can have none of these, we can and certainly shall have from every print-room and painter-engraver's studio in Europe, the Immerzeels', the Scheltemas', the de Vries', the Vosmaers', the Bredius', the de Rœvers', the Rovinski's,* the Lippmann's, the Duplessis', the Bode's, the Sträters', the von Seidlitz', and many a one besides, who, I doubt not, each in his way and with equal sincerity (though the way has not, in my humble opinion, been the right way) is as anxious as myself to get at the truth. And who knows but that M. Michel himself may put in an appearance, if only to tell us how it is that in his

* Since this was written, M. Rovinski has, unhappily, died.

otherwise comprehensive account of Rembrandt and his work he has been persuaded to relegate all mention of so important a feature of it as the discovery of these commercial plates to the cold shade of an Appendix !

Nor, in the pursuit of truth, is it possible to do less, in bringing this lecture to a close, than wonder at those who have thought they have seen in that pursuit a disposition to undermine the fame of Rembrandt; at those who have failed to perceive that, in seeking to draw the line between the work of the master and of the man, this disposition has been all the other way. Is it not rather they, who, by shutting their eyes to facts, and refusing to a great human personality all share of human weakness, have been doing their best to denaturalize and belittle it, and, as a biographical study of the greatest interest and importance, to divest it of half its value? I have nothing to reproach myself with on this score. If we are to write history let us, at least, write it truly and not—as the unwholesome fashion is—as we wish it to be. Do we exalt our hero, increase our knowledge of him, understand his art the better, love him the more and make others love him the more, by thus seeking to mould him to our own proportions?—for that is what such writing means. Surely not. Let us at least have Rembrandt as he was: see him in all the phases of his chequered career: be equally in touch with him in his successes, his failures, and even in his shortcomings, assured that all will go—as in some occult, unfathomable way, we know all did go—to the wealth of his palette, the spontaneity of his point, and in a word, to make him the Man he was.

L'ŒUVRE GRAVÉ
DE
REMBRANDT:

AUTHENTIQUE ET APOCRYPHE.

CONFÉRENCE

FAITE À LA LONDON INSTITUTION LE 25 JANVIER;
À LA GALERIE DE LA SOCIÉTÉ ROYALE DES PEINTRES-GRAVEURS LE 5 AVRIL;
ET AU THÉÂTRE DES GALERIES DU MUSÉE UNIVERSITAIRE
D'OXFORD LE 31 OCTOBRE, 1895.]

PAR

SIR FRANCIS SEYMOUR HADEN, P.R.E., &c.

Londres :

MESSRS. MACMILLAN & CO.

1896.

'[Tous Droits Réservés.]

NOTE EXPLICATIVE.

LES pages suivantes, avec l'addition d'une douzaine de lignes rendue nécessaire par certaines remarques erronées de la presse tant anglaise que continentale, contiennent en substance la Conférence faite le 5 avril, 1895, à la prière d'un certain nombre de critiques amis et bienveillants qui ont désiré avoir l'expression de l'opinion de l'auteur sur ces remarques, en même temps que son jugement sur Rembrandt ainsi que les conclusions auxquelles il est arrivé. L'auteur considère que cette explication a été donnée complètement dans l'Appendice de l'édition anglaise de sa Monographie sur Rembrandt, qui a sans doute échappé à la connaissance de ces écrivains. On la pourra trouver dès à présent chez les éditeurs en français comme en anglais.

Pour rendre son sujet bien clair il a divisé sa Conférence en quatre parties ou chapitres. 1° Il rappelle les circonstances qui l'ont amené dès 1847-48 à douter du caractère authentique de plusieurs des eaux-fortes généralement attribuées à Rembrandt, ainsi que les moyens par lesquels, comme membre du Comité du Burlington Fine Arts Club, il parvint à transformer ce doute en certitude. 2° Il explique comment le fait peut être prouvé au moyen de projections. 3° En exposant le caractère empirique et la basse origine de la classification de Bartsch, il s'efforce de désarmer l'opposition de ceux qui la soutiennent encore. 4° Il espère en amener la complète révision avec la précieuse coopération des autorités du Musée Britannique.

Les principaux faits sur lesquels s'appuie la Conférence sont les suivants : 1° Les représentations répétées mais de nature toute privée faites par l'auteur au comité du Burlington Fine Arts Club aussitôt

NOTE EXPLICATIVE.

après la première Exposition des eaux-fortes de Rembrandt selon l'ordre de Bartsch, afin d'obtenir d'eux une deuxième Exposition en suivant l'ordre de la date de production ; 2° Une demande formelle faite par lettre au comité, signée de l'auteur et de feu Mr. Fisher, en date du 12 déc. 1876, dans le même but ; 3° La soumission au comité au commencement de 1877 d'un tableau détaillant la nature, les objets et l'arrangement par ordre chronologique, qui aurait servi d'introduction et de guide à cette Exposition ; 4° L'approbation donnée par le comité à cette Introduction qu'il fit imprimer à l'usage du Club le premier mai de la même année ; 5° La réimpression en 1879 de cette Introduction comme Monographie avec un Appendice rendue nécessaire par suite de l'appropriation en bloc de son travail par le Rév. C. H. Middleton ; 6° Enfin une traduction de cette Monographie en français, où le traducteur fit la faute sérieuse (échappée alors à l'attention de l'auteur) d'omettre les points d'interrogation qui, dans tous les cas sauf un seul, accompagnaient l'expression de ses idées dans l'édition anglaise ; rendant ainsi l'auteur responsable aux yeux du lecteur continental de certaines opinions qui, bien que fondées, n'étaient pas définitives.

Woodcote Manor, Alresford, Hants.

5 avril, 1895.

REMBRANDT :

AUTHENTIQUE ET APOCRYPHE.

IL serait peut-être difficile, sinon impossible, de trouver dans toute l'étendue de ce que l'on peut appeler à juste titre l'art non académique, c'est-à-dire l'art spontané et ne dépendant d'aucune tradition académique, une figure plus intéressante que celle de Rembrandt ; une personnalité mieux définie ; un artiste plus digne de cette étude presque analytique que fit, à sa meilleure époque, Ruskin de Turner. Et pourtant, depuis sa mort en 1669 jusque vers le milieu de notre siècle, c'est à peine si on sut autre chose de Rembrandt si ce n'est qu'après un court moment de popularité il tomba dans une complète défaveur ; que son art devint un objet de dédain, et que vers la fin de sa vie, dans la plénitude de son génie, il ne pouvait obtenir six florins d'un portrait pour lequel nous donnerions volontiers aujourd'hui autant de milliers de livres sterling. Il semblait être oublié quand il y a quarante ou cinquante ans des flots de lumière furent jetés sur son histoire ; la Monographie* que j'ai à la main en peut revendiquer une certaine part en ce qui concerne ses eaux-fortes ; une part plus considérable, en ce qui concerne sa peinture, est due à un livre remarquable de M. Emile Michel† qui vient de paraître ; sa

* L'ŒUVRE GRAVÉE DE REMBRANDT. MONOGRAPHIE.

Ecritte comme Introduction à une Exposition par ordre chronologique des eaux-fortes de Rembrandt, la première ainsi tenue, au Burlington Fine Arts Club, en mai 1877, dans le but d'annoncer et de corroborer certaines idées nouvelles sur le caractère peu authentique de plusieurs de ces eaux-fortes, par Francis Seymour Haden. London, Macmillan, 1879. Paris, 1880—8 Rue Favart.

† REMBRANDT : SA VIE, SON ŒUVRE, ET SON TEMPS. Paris, 1893.

vie privée et sa carrière d'artiste ont surtout été mises au jour par les découvertes de MM. Koloff, Elsevier, Immerseel, Scheltema, de Vries, Vosmaer, Bredius, de Roever,* et d'autres auteurs dont à la vérité le livre de M. Michel est un résumé compétent et intéressant.

La part que j'ai prise à ce réveil d'intérêt pour la vie privée de Rembrandt sera bientôt dite. Il y a cinquante ans, en 1845-6-7 et 8, se trouvait à Bunhill Row, dans le vieux quartier quaker de Londres, un magasin de revendeur de vieilles estampes tenu par un certain Love. Ce magasin était unique dans son genre : non-seulement il aurait été impossible d'y trouver une seule estampe moderne, mais pas une non plus qui par son état ou par la qualité de l'impression valût plus de cinq shellings ; et cependant pas une qui ne pût passer pour une gravure authentique ou attribuable à un grand maître. A l'âge de vingt-cinq ans, où la bourse est légère mais l'enthousiasme ardent, ce magasin avait pour moi un irrésistible attrait ; je m'y rendais souvent à cheval ou en voiture après une journée de travail dans le West End, et m'emparant avec la permission du propriétaire de l'un de ses nombreux portefeuilles poudreux, je l'emportais chez moi et restais à y fouiller une partie de la nuit. Je doute que celui qui, faute de dispositions ou de tempérament, ne sait pas faire la distinction entre deux traits de burin, puisse comprendre le charme délicieux qu'avaient pour moi ces jeunes nuits ambrosiennes ; et l'avidité avec laquelle je recherchais la valeur précise et l'intention de chacun des traits, jusqu'à ce que toute l'ordonnance de la planche me fût révélée. Si je rappelle ce fait, ce n'est pas que cela en vaille la peine, mais parce qu'il est essentiel de vous dire que, chacun de ces portefeuilles contenant l'œuvre d'un certain maître, soit Dürer, soit Lucas van Leyden, ou quelque autre, et comme les estampes de chacun de ces maîtres étaient le

* Oud-Holland.

plus souvent signées et datées, mon premier soin, même à cette époque lointaine, était de les arranger par ordre de date avant de les étudier. A les contempler ainsi, selon l'ordre de leur production, je m'aperçus combien était accru l'intérêt de cette étude ; et, en ce qui concerne Rembrandt, j'arrivai ainsi, mieux que par tout autre moyen, à connaître et à comprendre sa méthode. Ce n'est pas tout. En rapprochant pour les comparer deux estampes de même date, il m'arrivait parfois de douter qu'elles fussent de la même main ; la composition était évidemment du maître, mais l'exécution offrait parfois des doutes. Sur ce point, et c'est le second fait important que je désire vous rappeler, j'en vins graduellement à la conclusion que l'exécution était parfois différente, et avec le temps je vis clairement que pour une foule de gravures attribuées à Rembrandt il fallait reconnaître qu'elles étaient d'autres mains. C'est à vrai dire cette conviction, fréquemment et franchement exprimée et maintenue, qui finit par amener, sur mes propres instances, cette seconde exposition par ordre de date des œuvres de Rembrandt à la Galerie du Burlington Fine Arts Club et qui est devenue partie de l'histoire de l'art. Cette exposition éclaira la première tout bon entendeur. Elle amena la publication de la Monographie déjà mentionnée, dont l'impression en français aussi bien qu'en anglais, éveilla l'intérêt sur cette question dans toute l'Europe. Et non-seulement elle convainquit les experts que les idées que je m'efforçais depuis si longtemps d'établir étaient bien fondées ; c'est-à-dire que si A était de Rembrandt, B ne pouvait pas en être ; mais encore elle fit sauter aux yeux des différences dans le travail authentique du maître à différentes époques de sa carrière et aux différentes phases de sa méthode, d'où nous pûmes déduire plus d'un détail de sa vie privée.* Cette exposition

* Un des plus intéressants de ces détails est qu'après la mort de sa femme Saskia, et pendant plusieurs années il grava des paysages en telle quantité qu'il faut en conclure qu'il avait quitté Amsterdam.

nous révéla aussi le fait intéressant qu'en partageant les trente années de sa carrière de graveur en trois décades, on voit que dans la première la plupart de ses planches étaient gravées à l'eau-forte, à l'aide d'un mordant ; dans la seconde, que l'effet en était rehaussé par un travail à la pointe sèche ; et dans la troisième que l'artiste, mettant de côté le procédé chimique plus froid, s'en tint à l'emploi de la pointe sèche plus voisine de la peinture. Si je n'avais pas obtenu un nouveau classement des gravures selon l'ordre de leur date, ce qui faisait le fond de ma requête au comité du club, ces faits et d'autres d'un égal intérêt, mais sans rapport avec le sujet de cette conférence, n'auraient pu devenir évidents pour nous. Je répète donc que parmi tant d'occasions semblables où le Club a si bien réussi à éveiller l'intérêt pour des questions d'art imparfaitement débrouillées, cette exposition et ses résultats se distinguent avec une netteté dont le comité peut être fier à juste titre.

Je commencerai donc par vous donner quelques détails sur les trois méthodes auxquelles j'ai fait allusion. Vous remarquerez que si je dis trois méthodes, ces méthodes, à parler strictement, dérivent de l'application spéciale des deux procédés ordinaires de la gravure : l'eau-forte et la pointe sèche. Quelques mots suffiront pour expliquer ce qui les distingue.

Procédé à l'eau-forte.—Je prends une planche de cuivre. Après en avoir enduit les deux côtés de vernis, j'y dessine avec une pointe d'acier un trait qui, rayant le vernis, découvre le métal ; je sou mets ce métal découvert à l'action d'un agent chimique quelconque ayant pour le métal une affinité plus grande que l'oxygène de l'air, de manière à le corroder et à y creuser un sillon qui retiendra l'encre de l'imprimeur et qui, soumis à la presse, rendra une impression sur papier ; c'est là en principe tout le procédé de la gravure à l'eau-forte.

Procédé à la pointe sèche.—Si, au lieu d'opérer sur une

planche enduite, j'opère immédiatement sur le métal nu, et qu'avec la même pointe j'incise dans la planche une ligne qui rejette une quantité de métal égale à sa profondeur, comme le fait un sillon tracé par la charrue, j'aurai fait deux choses : non-seulement j'ai obtenu une ligne qui, remplie d'encre, imprimera ; mais, en outre, j'ai fait lever sur son bord extérieur une frange métallique qui, retenant plus d'encre encore, imprimera aussi ; ces deux effets, produiront le résultat mixte, appelé *pointe sèche*.

(Projections.)

Comme exemples de la première de ces méthodes, c'est-à-dire la gravure à l'eau-forte, voyez Bartsch 208, 210, 42 ; et comme exemples de la seconde, la gravure rehaussée par la *pointe sèche*, B. 227, 103, 270, 67, 74, 212 ; de la troisième, la *pointe sèche* seule, B. 222, 284, 76, 78. Si j'ai choisi ces exemples c'est qu'ils montrent clairement, à ce que je sache, les seules méthodes employées par Rembrandt. On lui a attribué, sans fondement aucun, toutes sortes de procédés mystérieux auxquels ses gravures devaient leur succès.* Les grands peintres-graveurs, de même que tous les grands artistes, ont travaillé simplement et avec les outils les plus simples. Ce sont seuls les graveurs et les copistes vulgaires qui font dépendre ce qu'ils appellent leur 'qualité' de l'aide d'une foule de moyens mécaniques qui, à vrai dire, travaillent pour eux et dont l'unique but est de rendre le travail aussi facile à un manœuvre qu'au graveur lui-même. L'effet inévitable est de réduire au rang de métier ce qui est un art.

II.

Voilà le premier chapitre de l'histoire de cette exposition. Passons au second, qui s'en distingue en ceci : le

* Voyez l'Appendice de la Monographie.

premier, nous a appris ce que nous ignorions ; le second, confirme notre découverte que plus d'une estampe jusqu'alors généralement attribuée à Rembrandt n'était nullement de lui.

Avant de projeter sur l'écran des preuves de ce fait aujourd'hui incontesté, permettez-moi quelques remarques sur le mystère qui voila la plus grande partie de la carrière de Rembrandt comme graveur et qui laisse encore inexpliqués et sujets à la discussion une foule de détails de cette carrière. Et d'abord, demandera-t-on, et cette demande m'a déjà été faite,* qu'est-ce qui a induit un si grand peintre, chargé à cette époque de tant de commandes, et qui venait de quitter Leyde pour s'établir à Amsterdam afin d'y mieux répondre, à consacrer à l'eau-forte une si grosse part de son temps et de son attention ? Pourquoi prit-il une maison dans le Breedstraet, pourquoi y fit-il installer ces petites chambres qui ont donné lieu à tant de discussions ? Quelles étaient, à l'époque de ce déménagement, ses rapports avec deux hommes, Livens et Van Vliet, qui n'étaient ni l'un ni l'autre ses élèves, mais qui tous deux étaient des graveurs dont la main se trahit plus ou moins évidemment dans tant d'estampes produites chez Rembrandt au commencement de sa carrière ? Pour moi, je l'avoue à grand regret, car nous entamons un chapitre de l'histoire du grand maître que nous aurions à cœur de sauter, je ne saurais accepter en aucune façon l'explication qu'en donne M. Michel qui, s'appuyant apparemment sur les données de Mr. Middleton, voudrait nous faire accroire que les nombreux élèves dont regorgeait alors l'atelier de Rembrandt n'étaient en majeure partie qu'un mythe, et nous faire mettre en doute le clair témoignage contemporain de Sandrart et de Houbraken : ceux-ci affirment que ces arrangements avaient été faits à leur intention et en vue de la formation d'une école. Une école

* Monographie, p. 12.

de quoi? De peinture? Non; la peinture demande de la place, plus de place que n'en offraient ces étroites cellules. Quel était donc leur objet? Quel était le genre d'instruction qu'on y recevait? Quel parti devait-on tirer de cette instruction? Quelle part, en un mot, devaient prendre ces élèves à cet extraordinaire développement de la gravure qui devint plus tard un trait si caractéristique de l'atelier de Rembrandt? J'avoue ne pouvoir faire autrement que de voir dans ces arrangements un plan préconçu qui dès l'abord visait ce développement; que l'école faisait partie de ce plan; que Livens et Van Vliet y étaient intéressés, et que tout le projet avait plus ou moins le caractère d'une affaire commerciale. Et pourquoi pas, diront les uns? L'art d'alors dépendait en grande mesure de collaborations, nous le savons. Rubens, qui n'était pas graveur à l'eau-forte, en avait donné l'exemple; Vandyke qui l'était, l'avait suivi et avait vu abîmer, sans angoisse apparente, grâce à l'espoir du lucre, ses eaux-fortes inimitables, 'achevées' par des mains mercenaires. Pourquoi Rembrandt ne devait-il pas en faire autant dans un pays de commerçants où cette forme de profit était peut-être mieux comprise et mieux appréciée que partout ailleurs, lui qui pouvait faire valoir ainsi un talent tout particulier? Pourquoi lui reprocher ce qui était alors d'un usage général, ce qui en somme nous a transmis son esprit, si nous n'avons pas sa main même? D'autre part, il est assurément permis de regretter une innovation qui devait marquer la fin d'un grand art original; et il est doublement à regretter qu'un tel art reçût le coup mortel de la main même et dans l'atelier de son plus grand maître! Je vois aussi clairement que qui que ce soit que Rembrandt n'était probablement que le prête-nom de personnages moins nobles qui avaient conçu et mis en train l'affaire, et que la signature '*Rembrandt, inventor, et fecit cum privilegio,*' apposée à des planches auxquelles il ne toucha jamais, et la suppression sur ces mêmes planches du nom de leurs véritables auteurs

étaient tout au plus une fiction légale qui était en somme moins blâmable que les prétendues épreuves qu'on nous offre et que nous avons la faiblesse d'acheter journellement sur l'invitation des Vendeurs d'Estampes Associés (Printsellers' Association).

Pour rendre la démonstration plus commode, je distingue six groupes de ce que j'ai appelé planches commerciales ; toutes appartiennent aux dix premières années de la carrière de Rembrandt. Bien que leur caractère discutable se manifeste dès que je les projette sur l'écran, elles sont inscrites comme authentiques aux catalogues de Bartsch et de ses successeurs, et sur cette seule autorité elles trouvent encore place dans toutes les collections publiques et privées de Rembrandts en Europe.

1. Le premier de ces groupes comprend la plupart des têtes dites de sa première manière et un certain nombre de mendiants qu'on reconnaîtra être de mains inhabiles en les comparant avec des planches authentiques.

2. Le second consiste en une série de petites planches faites évidemment d'après des tableaux ou des compositions de Rembrandt, toutes apparemment gravées par la même main qui, cependant, n'est pas celle de Rembrandt.

3. Le troisième groupe contient un certain nombre de planches ambitieuses et de grandeur remarquable exécutées vers la même époque et déjà décrites dans la Monographie (pp. 24 à 29) ; jusqu'à l'exposition du club elles avaient joui d'une réputation universelle et obtenaient des prix élevés ; aujourd'hui on les considère, de commun accord, non-seulement comme des copies, mais même comme des copies à la correction desquelles Rembrandt n'a eu qu'une part faible ou peu appréciable.

4. Planches dont certaines parties seulement sont de Rembrandt et le reste de ses aides,

5. Planches de date postérieure qui, tout en étant de Rembrandt, sont des arrangements de dessins d'autres artistes et ne sont pas de son inspiration.

6. Planches, la plupart des paysages, attribuées à Rembrandt sans la moindre raison, mais qui figurent encore comme de lui dans toutes les collections dressées d'après le catalogue de Bartsch.

(*Projections.*) GROUPE 1.

Comparez comme exemples de vrais Rembrandts, Bartsch 354, date 1628; B. 24, 1630; B. 16, 1631; B. 2; B. 23, 1634; B. 18, 1634; B. 131; B. 140; B. 129, 1635; B. 133, 1639; avec les planches suivantes qui ont à peu près la même date et qui selon moi sont fausses, B. 355; B. 8; 252; B. 15, 1631; B. 3; B. 293; B. 360; B. 154 (et ce qu'on appelle son 'premier état'); B. 135, 1631; B. 166; B. 167, 1631 (qui est de Livens); B. 171, 1631; B. 175 (avec son soi-disant 'premier état').*

(*Projections.*) GROUPE 2.

Comparez (comme vrais Rembrandts de ce groupe), Bartsch 129, 1635; B. 99, 1639; B. 109, 1639; avec B. 38, signé *Rembrandt van Ryn f. 1633*; B. 68, 1634; B. 100, 1634; B. 71, 1634; B. 37, 1638.

Examinez aussi, à propos de ce groupe, B. 90, signé '*Rembrandt inventor et fecit 1633*.'

(*Projections.*) GROUPE 3.

Comparez la planche (authentique) B. 81, '*Rembrandt f., 1633*,' en même temps qu'une partie de la même estampe qui montre en détail le travail du maître, avec B. 81 (à mon avis apocryphe), '*Rembrandt cum prvol.*'

* On n'a pas cru nécessaire de donner au long le titre de ces estampes; celui qui, n'ayant pas assisté à la conférence, voudrait les identifier et les étudier, ne peut le faire qu'en consultant les numéros du catalogue de Bartsch.

1633'; en même temps qu'une partie de cette estampe qui trahit la main d'un copiste. Aussi B. 77, '*Rembrandt f. cum privele., 1636*' (apocryphe), avec une partie de la même comme preuve à l'appui.

Examinez aussi B. 73, '*R' van Ryn f.,*' par rapport à ce groupe, mais de date antérieure, et comme planche dessinée d'après Rembrandt et non exécutée par lui (?).

Je trouve, après mûr examen, que je n'ai rien à rétracter de ce que j'ai dit de ces impressions dans la Monographie, pp. 25 à 29. Je considère, à vrai dire, *le Bon Samaritain*, bien que conçu par Rembrandt, comme de la même main qu'on reconnaît dans plusieurs planches du Groupe 2. *La Résurrection de Lazare*, faite également d'après un dessin de Rembrandt, n'a pas non plus été gravée par lui. Je maintiens que Mariette ne fut pas le premier, comme on l'a prétendu, à douter de l'authenticité de la *Descente de Croix*, et du reste qu'il n'en a jamais douté; et qu'en somme les 'traditions courantes' de la Salle des Estampes du Musée Britannique sur lesquelles s'appuie l'auteur de cette légende n'ont pas plus de fondement que la fameuse histoire *Josi-Carpenter* qu'on avait pour but de corroborer.*

(*Projections.*) GROUPE 4.

Comme exemples de ce groupe voyez B. 44, 1634; B. 281, 1639; et B. 192, pour le travail de copiste, et des parties de la même planche laissées en blanc pour être terminées par Rembrandt; ces planches sembleraient indiquer que Rembrandt, ne pouvant supporter plus longtemps la vulgarité de Van Vliet et des copistes, résolut de faire désormais lui-même les parties les plus importantes.

(*Projections.*) GROUPE 5.

Comparez B. 286, '*Rembrandt geretuc., 1635;*' B. 287, '*Rembrandt geretuckerdt;*' et B. 288, '*Rembrandt geretuck.,*

* Monographie, Appendice, p. 48.

1635,' avec des planches à sujets semblables par Livens, où le mot *geretuckerdt* montre clairement que Rembrandt se reconnaissait redevable envers Livens pour les originaux de ces eaux-fortes.

B. 56, sans nom ni date, est une appropriation semblable de la main de Rembrandt d'une planche gravée par *Hercule Seghers*.

Cette planche, telle que l'avait laissée Seghers qui venait de mourir, était à l'origine de peu de mérite; le feuillage était tout mécanique, le mordant maladroit, les figures plus exagérées même que celles du dessin du Comte Goudt copié par Seghers. Rembrandt songea à remédier à ces défauts; premièrement, par la substitution d'un groupe plus en proportion pour la grandeur avec la composition; secondement, en couvrant de pointe sèche tout l'arrière-plan déjà gravé, ce qui la rendit moelleuse et harmonieuse et d'un plus grand effet (*Rov. Atlas, B. 56*), bref, en fit une planche fort belle. Cette pointe sèche, cependant, par suite du dessous rugueux, s'usa bientôt de telle sorte qu'il n'en existe plus de belles épreuves. Il n'y a pas non plus, à proprement parler, d'états de cette planche: les changements qui y ont été faits depuis qu'elle tomba dans les mains de Rembrandt n'étant que des additions faites auprès de la presse à mesure, semblerait-il, que les épreuves en sortaient.

B. 104, sans nom ni date, dite '*Dans le goût de Dürer.*'

C'est une erreur absolue de croire qu'il y ait quoi que ce soit qui rappelle Dürer dans cette planche, une des plus belles œuvres de Rembrandt. Le sujet en est tout italien; le saint et le lion y ont été substitués à une Vénus qui était au premier plan d'un dessin de Titien. Ce dessin, dont je prédisais autrefois l'existence probable, fit son apparition à la vente du Dr. Wellesley et fut, si je ne me trompe, acheté par feu Mr. Locker Lampson.

B. 60, '*Rembrandt f. 1654.*'—(Les figures sont de Rembrandt, mais l'arrière-plan probablement d'après Titien ou Campagnola.)

B. 63, 1654.—Remarquez que la principale figure, *celle de la Vierge*, est entièrement d'après Mantegna.

B. 107, 1657.—Autres d'exemples d'adaptations partielles de maîtres italiens.

(*Projections.*) GROUPE 6.

B. 31, 32, 59, 93, 95, 106, 108, 119, 127, 132, 135, 145, 146, 149, 295, 329, 331, 339, 350, 357, 360, et d'autres, surtout des paysages, sont si évidemment faux, qu'il est inutile d'insister.

III.

Quant à la cause de tout ce désordre, de toutes ces erreurs d'attribution, du mystère qui a voilé toute l'histoire de la carrière de Rembrandt comme graveur, jusqu'au jour où il fut éclairci par l'exposition du Club, à qui en incombe la responsabilité? Comment cela se fit-il? Je n'ai jamais entendu discuter cette partie du sujet; jamais on n'a proposé de solution: on n'a même pas émis l'idée qu'il y en ait une possible. Et cependant, à mon avis, elle est toute trouvée.

Nous n'avons qu'à nous rappeler que ceux qui dressèrent les premiers catalogues des eaux-fortes de Rembrandt étaient des vendeurs d'estampes et non des artistes, des boutiquiers qui arrangeaient leur marchandise de manière à la retrouver plus aisément, ici les portraits, là les paysages, puis les scènes religieuses et ainsi de suite, de même que le mercier a différents tiroirs pour les rubans, les gants ou les lacets. Ceux qui écrivirent ensuite systématiquement sur Rembrandt, ne pouvaient prévoir les questions qui sont ici soulevées; et n'étant nécessairement ni artistes, ni graveurs, ni experts, ils adoptèrent tout bonnement les méthodes de leurs prédécesseurs. Il faut songer enfin que les conservateurs et gardiens des collections publiques regardaient comme un devoir le maintien du *statu quo*; leur liberté d'action, comme celle de tous les fonctionnaires publics, était forcément

limitée ; et ils hésitaient à déranger un ordre sanctionné par la routine et facilité par l'usage. Personne, cependant, ne sait mieux que ces messieurs que la classification de Bartsch est barbare et sans autorité au point de vue de l'esthétique et de l'éducation ; ils savent aussi que cette classification est religieusement suivie sur les trois quarts du continent et surtout en Allemagne ; qu'à douter de son infaillibilité on passerait presque pour un impie, et que la moindre tentative de suppression serait une témérité promptement réprimée. Personne, je crois, mieux que l'érudit Gardien des Estampes au Musée Britannique, ne sent l'inconséquence de cet état de choses tel qu'il l'a trouvé ; personne ne serait plus prêt à l'abandonner devant des raisons si convaincantes. En attendant, voici quel est le classement des eaux-fortes de Rembrandt, si on peut l'appeler classement, dans tous les musées de l'Europe, y compris le nôtre. D'abord, parmi les belles têtes de la première manière du maître lui-même se trouvent mêlées dans une inextricable confusion les indicibles vulgarités de Van Vliet, ou parfois les crudités enfantines de quelque jeune élève ; et, à côté de celles-ci, des portraits achevés de la dernière et meilleure manière de Rembrandt ; le tout entassé ainsi sans autre raison que parce que ce sont des portraits. Je demande respectueusement ce qu'un si beau désordre, ce qu'un ramassis d'idées si savamment coordonnées peut nous apprendre. Qu'on s'imagine, comme réduction à l'absurde, un catalogue du règne animal fait d'après un tel plan, ici des têtes, là des queues, et dans une autre subdivision le corps de l'animal que nous cherchons à identifier ! Sérieusement, c'est à cette simple cause et à nulle autre que sont dus, selon moi, le mystère et la confusion qui embrouillent toute l'histoire de Rembrandt comme graveur ; de là vient l'insuccès des faiseurs de catalogues à établir les différences de style et de manière qui déterminent les questions d'attribution ; car toute faculté critique s'émousse dans ce désordre.

Mettons à l'épreuve la valeur de cette opinion. Le premier de ces marchands dresseurs de catalogues fut Gersaint de Paris, vendeur d'estampes au premier tiers du siècle dernier. Ce Gersaint avait acheté à Houbraken, qui de son côté avait acheté aux exécuteurs testamentaires du bourgmestre Six une collection, la collection des eaux-fortes de Rembrandt qu'on nous dit expressément avoir été acquise de Rembrandt lui-même par Six, épreuve par épreuve 'à mesure qu'elle était achevée.' Remarquez, s'il vous plaît, la citation 'à mesure qu'elle était achevée,' car elle explique exactement l'ordre en faveur duquel je plaide et qu'à mon avis devraient suivre toutes les collections semblables. L'on avait donc ici une collection unique, parfaite sans doute comme impression, complète probablement comme nombre, absolument sûre comme provenance. Voyons ce qu'elle devint. Nous savons qu'elle fut remaniée dans un but commercial par Gersaint ; son livre le prouve. Nous savons qu'il mourut avant de pouvoir l'imprimer, puisque Helle et Glomy, marchands d'estampes aussi, achetèrent son manuscrit en 1751, et en l'imprimant 'y ajoutèrent 41 pièces ;' que Pierre Yver de même, qui en 1756 succéda à Helle et à Glomy, 'en ajouta beaucoup d'autres ;' et que finalement, grâce à Bartsch, ces additions étaient devenues si nombreuses, qu'une collection qui à l'origine comprenait possiblement deux cents planches, n'en compta pas moins de trois cent soixante-seize ! Sous quel prétexte, je le répète respectueusement, fit-on ces additions successives ? Et maintenant qu'elles sont faites, sur quelle autorité se fondent les compatriotes de Bartsch pour les justifier ou plutôt pour justifier l'adoption d'un système aussi lâche par tous les faiseurs de catalogues depuis Gersaint ?

Nommons Claussin et Daulby, en 1828 ; Wilson, en 1836 ; Charles Blanc, en 1853 ; Middleton, en 1878 ; Dutuit, en 1881 ; Rovinski, en 1890 ; von Seidlitz, en 1894 et 1895. Ce dernier, bien que reconnaissant sa barbarie, n'en conclut pas moins

à son maintien, comme étant le seul système pratique ; selon lui, c'est le seul système qui soit compris d'un faiseur de catalogues. Je reviendrai sur ce sujet dans la prochaine édition de la Monographie. Pour le moment, comme commentaire à cet aveu qui est si préjudiciable à la prétention de Bartsch, je ne poserai que cette simple question : Comment se fait-il, si la classification de Bartsch est la seule pratique, que pas même deux de ses successeurs n'aient pu s'entendre sur l'ordre à donner aux diverses pièces ? Comment se fait-il, par exemple, que le N^o. 1 de Bartsch, '*Rembrandt aux cheveux crépus*,' devienne le 51 de Middleton et le 204 de Blanc ? Que le N^o. 2 de Bartsch, '*Rembrandt à trois moustaches*,' devienne le 106 de Middleton et le 206 de Blanc ? Que le 40 de Bartsch, '*le Triomphe de Mardochée*,' soit le 228 de Middleton et le 12 de Blanc ? Que le 90 de Bartsch, '*le Bon Samaritain*,' soit le 185 de Middleton, le 41 de Blanc, le 94 de Claussin, le 95 de Wilson ? etc. Bref, il n'y en a pas deux qui concordent. Il faut qu'il y ait un vice radical dans un système qui permet, ou même exige pour être compris, de telles inconséquences ; ce système tient si peu qu'il s'effondre et tombe en pièces chaque fois qu'une nouvelle main y touche ! Quant aux additions arbitraires dont on a voulu l'étayer mais qui n'ont fait qu'ajouter à sa faiblesse et à son discrédit, je trouve, comme je m'y attendais, en me rapportant à celles qu'ont faites à l'origine Helle et Glomy, que deux seulement ou trois tout au plus peuvent remonter à l'atelier de Rembrandt sans qu'on puisse les attribuer à sa main. Mais elles pouvaient servir d'appât au collectionneur.*

Ceci me ramène à une partie du sujet que je ne puis écarter, bien que je l'eusse préféré. Je savais naturellement qu'en me décidant à faire cet historique je causerais des froissements et que certains n'y trouveraient pas leur compte ;

* Ces additions sont faciles à distinguer, étant marquées d'un astérisque.

que j'aurais contre moi le collectionneur qui a donné de grosses sommes pour des trésors qui n'ont plus de valeur ; le vendeur qui a joui du privilège de fournir ces trésors ; le fabricant d'états imaginaires, et le critique qui s'est battu les flancs pour en relever le mérite ; je savais que cet historique plairait médiocrement à l'écrivain de profession dont j'avais envahi le domaine et prévenu les conclusions, et qu'il s'efforcerait d'en diminuer l'importance ; qu'en somme, l'auteur infortuné passerait 'un bon temps,' comme disent les Américains, en attendant l'adoption définitive du remaniement qu'il préconise. Je prévoyais tout cela ; j'y étais préparé. Mais je me serais guère attendu à la déclaration d'un auteur aussi pratique que M. Rovinski (auteur qui, du reste, a rendu de bons services par sa vive et coûteuse étude), d'après laquelle 'l'artiste est peut-être le juge le moins capable en ces matières,' et encore : 'les retranchements arbitraires qu'il demande ne doivent être concédés que sur la production de témoignages *documentaires* de nature à démontrer non-seulement que Rembrandt n'est pas l'auteur des planches apocryphes, mais encore capables d'en *prouver l'origine*.' C'est dire qu'un faux chèque n'est pas un témoignage suffisant de sa fausseté, et qu'un malheureux qu'on trouve assassiné sur la route n'est assassiné que quand on a trouvé son meurtrier ! Il prétend encore que 'ce qui contentait Rembrandt doit nous contenter' et 'que la planche soit de lui ou non, il suffit qu'elle provienne de son atelier, qu'elle soit, par conséquent, imprégnée de son esprit, pour la défendre de toute critique.' On croirait vraiment, en présence de tels raisonnements, que leurs auteurs ont complètement perdu de vue la différence de valeur artistique entre un original et une copie : ils semblent avoir oublié que, depuis l'an 1400 jusqu'en 1650 ou environ, c'est-à-dire depuis le temps de Mantegna jusqu'à celui de Rubens et de Vandyke, période où s'exécutèrent les plus fameux tableaux que le monde ait vus, le peintre était son propre graveur, et que le graveur copiste, tel que nous le connaissons, n'existait pas ;

ils ignorent enfin que c'est grâce à ce fait que nous possédons aujourd'hui des œuvres gravées autographes comme on n'en avait jamais vu et comme on n'en reverra jamais à moins que la Société Royale des Peintres-graveurs, dont le but est de relever cet art et de faire du graveur de l'avenir un artiste et non un artisan, ne réussisse dans l'objet qu'elle a à cœur. La liste que j'ai rédigée et que je vous montre à présent sur l'écran servira du moins à rappeler à ces écrivains l'importance, au point de vue esthétique, de conserver dans toute son intégrité la liste exacte et fidèle des œuvres de ces vieux peintres-graveurs, le nom des pays qui les ont produits, les écoles qu'ils ont fondées, les branches de l'art qu'ils ont pratiquées. Ne pas s'en occuper, prétendre qu'une eau-forte d'après Rembrandt vaut une eau-forte de Rembrandt, c'est contrecarrer nos jaloux efforts pour écarter de nos collections les estampes contrefaites, et égaler la valeur artistique de vrais trésors à celle du papier de rebut ! J'admets qu'on doit tenir compte du fait indubitable que Rembrandt a donné sa sanction à l'émission de ces planches qui ne sont pas de lui ; je dis seulement que le fait est regrettable et qu'on ne doit pas nous demander d'y fermer les yeux comme le voudraient certains de mes adversaires. Je n'ai jamais proposé non plus que dans notre nouvelle classification de ses œuvres on écartât sans leur donner de place ces Rembrandts apocryphes ; j'ai demandé au contraire qu'une place reconnue leur fût assignée, à la condition qu'elle fût strictement définie.

C'est avec soulagement que je m'éloigne maintenant d'objections si mal fondées afin de prendre un moment moi-même le rôle ingrat d'opposant. Tout en admirant le grand talent littéraire de M. Michel dans son important ouvrage sur Rembrandt, je crains d'avoir à m'inscrire en faux contre les opinions qu'il émet et les conseils qu'il donne. Si M. Michel, par exemple, condamne comme triviales, fantastiques et mal dessinées plusieurs des planches les plus importantes de

Rembrandt,* il s'ensuit qu'il me pardonnera de ne pouvoir pas accepter sa recommandation de confier à un nouveau connaisseur éminent le catalogue futur des œuvres de Rembrandt. J'ai déclaré d'ailleurs que *seul un expert qui a fait son apprentissage aux presses mêmes peut assumer cette tâche avec succès* ; et comme preuve à l'appui, j'ai fait voir le désaccord où sont tombés depuis Gersaint les auteurs de catalogues. Il faut donc absolument trouver quelque nouveau système ; et cela étant évident, je proposerais que lorsque le moment propice sera venu, ce travail fût entrepris, non par un seul individu, quelque éminent qu'il soit, mais par une commission d'experts qui, prenant pour base l'arrangement chronologique, représenteraient plutôt le côté pratique de la question que cet autre côté auquel le simple littérateur n'a pas su rendre justice.

IV.

Il ne me reste plus, messieurs, qu'à répéter et à déclarer publiquement ce que je crois, depuis bien des années, être le seul remède à toute cette confusion, avant que quelque contrefacteur sans conscience ne s'en empare et ne le donne pour sien. Ce remède est tout purement et simplement de refaire sur une échelle plus grande l'exposition nécessairement incomplète et insuffisante du Burlington Fine Arts Club. Cette exposition complète, vous serez heureux de l'apprendre, à l'honneur des experts anglais, M. le Professeur Colvin a entrepris de l'organiser dans la grande salle attenante à la Salle des Estampes du Musée Britannique, dans laquelle il sera facile de pendre côte à côte l'œuvre entière de Rembrandt, authentique et apocryphe, cette juxtaposition étant, je le répète, nécessaire au succès de l'entreprise. Qui ne viendra pas voir et s'instruire à une telle exposition ? Qui ne viendra pas lire et se convaincre en présence d'une grande histoire

* Voyez ses critiques du '*Triomphe de Mardochée*,' de la '*Mise au Tombeau de N. Seigneur*,' du '*Christ prêchant*,'

parlant, pour ainsi dire, par elle-même? Nous ne pourrions, hélas! y accueillir aucun de ceux dont nous avons cité les noms au début de cette conférence, et dont les renseignements, voire même les confessions, auraient si bien pu confirmer ou corriger nos conclusions. Un des deux frères Houbraken aurait pu nous dire tout ce que nous désirons savoir sur le nombre des pièces et sur la classification de cette unique collection que Gersaint se mêla le premier de remanier et que Helle et Glomy falsifièrent. Nous n'y verrons pas le respectable et incolore Adam Bartsch, qui, sans songer à mal, accepta, augmenta et perpétua ces falsifications et fit plus ainsi pour porter atteinte à la gloire de Rembrandt que le plus pur Van Vliet qui s'insinua jamais dans son atelier. Si nous ne pouvons espérer la présence de ceux-ci, nous verrons du moins accourir de tous les cabinets d'estampes de l'Europe, de tous les ateliers de peintres-graveurs, les Immerzeel, les Scheltemas, les de Vries, les Vosmaer, les Bredius, les de Roevers, les Rovinski,* les Duplessis, les Lippmann, les Bode, les Sträter, les von Seidlitz, et bien d'autres encore; tous, à leur façon et avec une sincérité égale, sont aussi désireux que moi d'arriver à la vérité, bien qu'à mon humble avis ils se soient trompés de voie. Et qui sait si M. Michel lui-même n'y viendra pas, quand ce ne serait que pour nous dire comment, dans un ouvrage aussi étendu sur Rembrandt et son œuvre, il a pu se laisser persuader de ne faire mention de cette si importante découverte des planches commerciales que dans l'ombre glaciale d'un Appendice?

En poursuivant la vérité, nous ne saurions passer sous silence, à la fin de cette conférence, l'étonnement que nous causent ceux qui ont cru voir dans cette poursuite le désir de porter atteinte à la gloire de Rembrandt, et qui n'ont pas reconnu qu'en cherchant à distinguer entre le travail du maître et celui de l'artisan nous avons voulu faire juste le

* Depuis que ceci a été écrit M. Rovinski est malheureusement décédé.

contraire. Tandis que ce sont eux qui, en niant les faits et en refusant toute faiblesse à une grande personnalité, on fait leur possible pour la dénaturer et l'amoindrir, et priver de la moitié de sa valeur son étude biographique qui est du plus grand intérêt, de la plus haute importance. Sur ce point je n'ai rien à me reprocher. Si nous devons écrire l'histoire, faisons-la telle qu'elle est, et non, selon une mode malsaine, telle que nous voudrions qu'elle fût. Relevons-nous notre héros, le connaissons-nous mieux, comprenons-nous mieux son art, l'aimons-nous davantage et le rendons-nous plus aimable, en cherchant ainsi à le ramener à nos propres proportions ? Car voilà où en viennent ces écrits. Assurément non. Contentons-nous de connaître Rembrandt tel qu'il était ; voyons-le dans toutes les phases variées de sa carrière ; accompagnons-le sympathiquement dans ses succès, dans ses revers, dans ses faiblesses même, et soyons assurés que tout contribuera, comme en effet tout a contribué d'une manière mystérieuse et insondable, à la richesse de sa palette, à la verve de sa pointe, en un mot, à faire de lui le géant qu'il était.

19th March, 1907.

Dear Mr. Green,

I am bound to say that I hardly think the British artists worthy to be "written round", though I will do so if you wish. The moral of the Exhibition is not wholly pleasing, except perhaps as showing the improvement since East took it over. To save trouble, I will proceed with it unless you write stopping me.

I fear, however, I cannot let you have it for Friday's paper, as, being "Art Adviser" to Hull, I have to take the Art Committee round to studios on that day and the four successive days. However, I will see if it can be done.

Sincerely yours,

M.H.

P.S. I have just had an enthusiastic letter from Sir Seymour Haden, President of the Painter-Etchers. He is in his 90th year, and is bedridden. He writes me ecstatically on my Painter-Etchers article and the views I expressed in it. By the way, if you are willing to attack the Printsellers' Association, there is a forcible article to be got out of their monstrous system of fleecing the public by the sale of what they call "proofs", which are not proofs in the true sense and which are no better in quality than common prints. I created a good deal of excitement some twenty years ago by such an attack in the "Pall Mall", and it is the memory of those great doings which spread over weeks that has moved old Seymour Haden.

W. Green, Esq.

Daily Leader

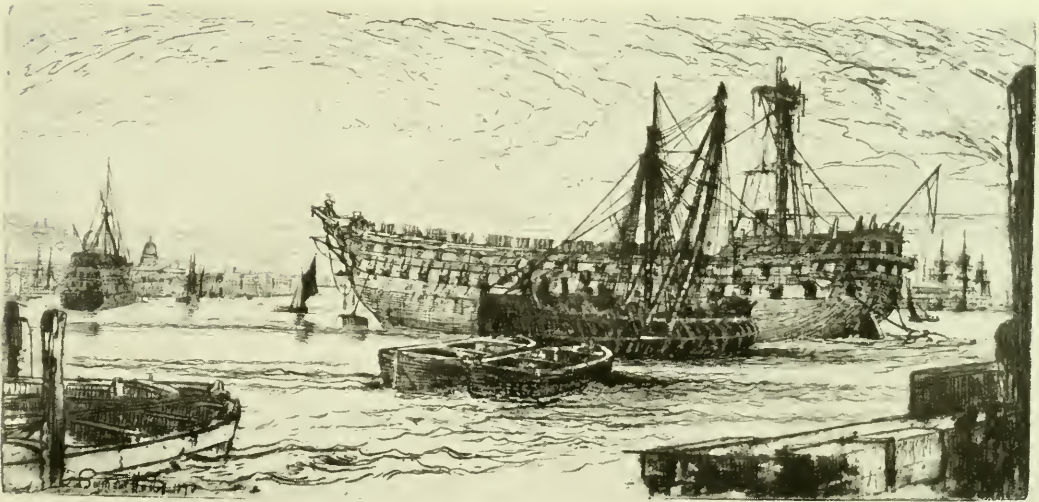
The ETCHINGS of SIR FRANCIS SEYMOUR HADEN, P.R.E.

WITH ABOUT ONE HUNDRED REPRODUCTIONS
INCLUDING SIXTEEN IN HAND-PRINTED PHOTO-
GRAVURE, AND AN INTRODUCTION BY
MALCOLM C. SALAMAN, HONOR-
ARY FELLOW OF THE ROYAL
SOCIETY OF PAINTER-
ETCHERS AND
ENGRAVERS

Size, Medium Quarto (11½ x 9 in.)

PRICE - - TWO GUINEAS NET

THERE WILL BE A LARGE-PAPER EDITION PRINTED
ON HAND-MADE PAPER AND LIMITED TO TWO
HUNDRED NUMBERED COPIES AT FIVE GUINEAS
EACH, INCLUDING A DUPLICATE SET OF THE
PHOTOGRAVURE PLATES ON JAPANESE VELLUM



"The Breaking-up of 'The Agamemnon.'"—First State

From a proof lent by Sir Frank Short, R.A., P.R.E.

LONDON: HALTON & TRUSCOTT SMITH, LTD. 57, HAYMARKET, S.W.

The ETCHINGS of HADEN

When death came laggardly to Sir Francis Seymour Haden at the great age of ninety-two, his place among the unquestioned masters of etching had already been secure for over half a century, and in the portfolios of the connoisseur-collectors were prints of his that had long been lovingly accorded recognition as classics. The force and individuality of character which could win for him brilliant distinction in the practice both of surgery and the delightful though long-unfavoured art of etching, he gave generously to the service of the art he loved, and to no one did its modern revival owe so much as to Haden. ¶ With the persuasion of his written and spoken word, charmingly emphasised by his own graphic expression on the copper-plate, which victoriously interpreted with vivid suggestive line the English, Welsh, or Irish landscape, and added masterpieces to the art's tradition, Haden stimulated the practice of original etching. He won for it the gradually widening appreciation of print-lovers, more readily even than did the genius of Whistler with his magic needle, though the illustrious names of the two masters must ever be associated with the art's brilliant revival in England. ¶ Haden's work with needle, dry-point, and mezzotint-scraper has, of course, been worthily honoured by cataloguers, but it is time that a choicely illustrated monograph was dedicated to him,



Looking from the river

Looking from the river

supplementing even the sumptuous catalogue raisonné. The forthcoming volume, therefore, will appeal to collectors and students with a picked representation of the master's work in about a hundred of his most desirable plates. Brilliant and rare proofs of these have been chosen for reproduction mainly from the comprehensive collection of Dr. H. Nazeby Harrington, Seymour Haden's trusty friend and executor, who has also kindly allowed his rare, authoritative catalogue to be drawn upon for a complete list of the master's plates with their several states of progress. ¶ The Introduction to the volume will be from the pen of Mr. Malcolm C. Salaman, Honorary Fellow of the Royal Society of Painter-Etchers and Engravers, whose writings on prints are so widely esteemed. The illustrations, sixteen of which will be in hand-printed photogravure, will be produced with the greatest care, and no effort will be spared to make the volume worthy of the master. It will be ready for publication about the end of September. There will be no reprint.

ORDER FORM

To

Booksellers

Please send me

copies of "THE ETCHINGS OF SIR FRANCIS

SEYMOUR HADEN, P.R.E.," price £2 2s. 0d. net, for which I enclose the
 £5 5s. 0d. sum of*

Name

Address

*Postage Extra: Inland, 1s.; Abroad, 1s to 1s. 6d. ¶ The work may be obtained through any Bookseller, or from
 HALTON & TRUSCOTT SMITH, LTD., 57, HAYMARKET, LONDON, S.W. 1

SEYMOUR HADEN'S ETCHINGS.

THE ETCHINGS OF SIR FRANCIS SEYMOUR HADEN, P.R.E. By MALCOLM C. SALAMAN. (Halton and Truscott Smith. £2 2s. Large paper edition, 200 copies, £5 5s.)

This beautiful book is entitled to unstinted praise, and is sure of a warm welcome amongst the increasing number of cultivated people who are now studying etching. The members of the Print Collectors' Club, in particular, should turn their attention to this presentation of the work of their club's very distinguished grandfather. The author, who is a well-known authority on the subject, contributes a first-rate preface of twenty-five pages, and there are nearly a hundred very fine reproductions.

The time has not come for a final judgment of Haden as an etcher. That must be pronounced by the future critic who never knew him and will not be distracted by personality, by biographical detail, or by partisanship. He will not care whether the etcher was a surgeon or a sailor, and will point out, rather more directly than Mr. Salaman does, that some of his plates were unworthy of him. But personality is one of the great interests of life. Was it because Haden exhibited at the Academy under another name that his etchings attracted no notice? Was it because he had become famous as an etcher that in 1900 he obtained the Grand Prix for mezzotints? We think it very unlikely that he would have been thus honoured under the name of "H. Dean." Seymour Haden was a great man. His best plates were works of genius; half a dozen of them, if not more, will bear comparison with the best landscape etchings known. He vitalized this expression of natural beauty, and shared with Whistler a real world-movement. His enthusiasm and energy were boundless, even in old age. It is idle to speculate upon what he might have done if he had had the technical education which is now the common heritage of students; but we are often tempted to think that he, like Van Dyck, lost nothing. If he had been told by the cold voice of authority that his "Sunset on the Thames" was open to grave objection, his originality might have received a disastrous check. To-day no one is allowed to rule lines in the sky—unless he is a known genius, and beyond control; perhaps this is why originality is scarce. We cannot refer to more of the fascinating and beautiful plates by name; but for those who know Haden's work only in a general way, the lovely Plate 23 ("The Letter") should prove a surprise, especially when compared with such an etching as "Whistler's House." Mr. Salaman is to be specially commended for his references to the great printer Goulding, who was immortalized by Strang.

harmony. In reading the rieurs du mal we think inevitably of Dante, and then perhaps of other sombre poets haunted with phantoms of death and horror, Donne and Webster, Tourneur and Beddoes. But only Dante has the Baudelairean capacity for horror and naked violence. A sonnet like "Les Aveugles," with its awe-inspiring sestet, can only be paralleled in the "Inferno."

Ils traversent ainsi le noir illimité,
Ce frère du silence éternel. O cité !
Pendant qu'autour de nous tu chantes, ris et
beugles,

Eprise du plaisir jusqu'à l'atrocité,
Vois, je me traîne aussi ! mais, plus qu'eux
hébété.

Je dis : Que cherchent-ils au Ciel, tout ces
aveugles ?

One finds, not a parallel passage, but a similar intensity in Dante's brief pictures of horror; for instance, in the centaurs who transfix the blood-guilty souls :—

D' intorno al fosso vanno a mille a mille,
Saettando quale anima si svelle
del sangue più che sua colpa sortille.

For the repulsive in Baudelaire, Dante's hideous portrait of Thais may be cited as a parallel :—

. . . quella sozza e scapigliata fante
che là si graffia con l'unghie merdose,
ed or s'accoscia, ed ora è in piede stante.

While for intolerable horror not even Baudelaire has equalled the episode of Ugolino gnawing the skull of Ruggieri.

But Dante passed on from Hell, through Purgatory, to Paradise; Baudelaire never gets out of Hell. Dante most rarely, Baudelaire never, escape from the tragedy of life to its beauty and gaiety; there is nothing in their pages like the meeting with Nausicaa, or the feast in the palace of Aleinous, or even the garden outside the cave of Calypso—scenes, episodes, pictures which reconcile us to life. Baudelaire, hypnotized with evil, Dante with his eyes fixed upon Heaven, trample upon much that is agreeable, gracious, and consoling. That is why Ronsard, Theocritus, and Horace are not to be forgotten or even subordinated to Dante, Villon, and Baudelaire. The wisdom of Ronsard, his gaiety and enjoyment of life, are scorned as mediocre platitudes; yet that tranquil and happy wisdom is no more common now than when Horace wrote two thousand years ago :—

Inde fit ut raro, qui se vixisse beatum,
Dicat, et exacto contentus tempore vitae.
Cedat, uti conviva satur, reperire queamus.

A limited edition of "Some Unknown Drawings of Aubrey Beardsley," collected and annotated by R. A. Walker, is announced for publication by the author at 16, The Avenue, Bedford Park, W. The reproductions were originally intended as illustrations to Mr. Walker's forthcoming catalogue and bibliography of Aubrey Beardsley's works, but are now issued as a "preliminary supplement" to that volume.

